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Se Tala Mai Hawai'i:

Reflections On Being Samoan In Hawai'i

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Introduction and Purpose

My return to college and my interest in Pacific Islands Studies have opened my eyes even wider now that I have been able to see the connection between my experiences and those of other Pacific people and scholars who study us. For so long, I have tried to understand my family's decision to move to Hawai'i; trying to understand the conflicting and sometimes unbearable situations I lived through in my youth while coping with the realization that Samoans were not well accepted, or even much liked by some. Graduate seminars in the Pacific Islands Studies program at the University of Hawai'i have shed much needed light on issues I have been faced with, often times suppressing in order to appreciate the seemingly good fortune that finds me here in Hawai'i, rather than in an "unknown" life in Samoa.

For more than a decade, I have reveled in the exciting creative and progressive artistic movement coming from Samoans in New Zealand. Expressive artistic works by greats like Albert Wendt, Sia Figiel, Jamoa Jam, Pacific Soul, "Samoan Wedding" and "The Laughing Samoans" in particular have been hugely popular among Hawai'i's Samoans, and have come to represent Samoans in general. There are still many others in a variety of fields whose work is illuminating and disseminating our Samoan history and customs, in addition to current trends in socio-economic and diasporic communities in New Zealand. With the exception of some studies in acculturation, demographics, social

services, unemployment, welfare and crime, Hawai'i's Samoans, for the most part, have been disconnected from or left out of progressive cultural and ethnic identity discourses. Current discourses on progressive Samoan identity issues in the diaspora are dominated by New Zealand-based Samoans and western scholars, and I have always wondered why Samoans in Hawai'i were not contributors to or partakers in similar culturally expressive endeavors.

Over the course of my graduate studies, I have realized that there is an even bigger issue emanating from New Zealand Samoans' scholarly and artistic creations: the issue of identity for those of us who were raised, educated or born outside of Samoa. Many New Zealand-based Samoan and western scholars, have dedicated their studies to examining issues of migration, acculturation, diaspora, etc. and the effects of these changes on the younger generations of Samoans caught between two worlds. All of these issues are very relevant to us here in Hawai'i; however, there has been little work originating from Hawai'i indicating a steady attempt by local Samoans to participate in the movement of expression that appears to be predominantly New Zealand-based.

Regarding the comparisons made between Hawai'i and New Zealand, I do not want to seem as if I am "picking a fight," so to speak, with New Zealand Samoans, or sound harsh and judgmental towards my fellow Hawai'i-based Samoans. Comparative discussions are useful for illustrating the issue at hand, as well as understanding the starting point of this paper and the over-arching concern. My main purpose is this: I simply want to use this project as an avenue, even if it's ground-level, to bring Hawai'i's Samoans into the larger discussion; to create an awareness for other Samoans in Hawai'i of the on-going academic and

artistic discourses that I feel we should be a part of, and significantly, to offer an approach to understanding why Hawai'i's Samoans are disconnected from current cultural and ethnic identity expressions in which New Zealand Samoans endeavor to express their Samoan-ness.

Of major importance, I must clarify that I will not be focusing on religious aspects of Samoan culture here in Hawai'i, except for emigrational origins as an overview. This paper is not focused on religious or spiritual factors as an identifier of expressing Samoan-ness, as religion is a complex issue in and of itself. Similarly, while language is indeed an important factor in cultural and ethnic identity and related discourses, I shall not concentrate on the ability to speak Samoan as a determinant of one's diasporic Samoan-ness. This work strives to reach a contemporary Hawai'i-based Samoan generation and language competency can often exclude, intimidate and discourage young Samoans who may not be able to speak the language. Religious and language aspects will be mentioned briefly and only when necessary, but with no elaboration on either, as these two topics are highly contentious and may distract from the focus of this paper which is primarily to understand and identify some expressions of a contemporary Samoan-ness in Hawai'i without prerequisites or limitations.

Methodology

This thesis project is in the form of a Portfolio/Plan B Paper. Part 1 is a reflective and expressive writing piece. It is done in the first person and conveys my reflections and experiences of coming to, growing up in, and still living as a Samoan in Hawai'i. The italicized sections represent the "voice" of my past in a brief biographical chronicling of events I consider to be defining moments;

accounts which I distinctly remember as having either confused or injured me in some way or another. The sections woven in between the italicized areas are dialogues between my reflective “now voice,” which is better informed (although sometimes verging on angry-sounding), and my passive “past voice,” which was ill-informed and easily affected by situations that were way over my head. The two “voices” in dialogue with myself make up Part 1 and is intended to share with the reader the first-hand experiences of a Pacific Islander’s transition from island life to the western world—to offer a *tala*, or a word from a Hawai’i Samoan point of view. It is a different way of presenting biographical memoirs; nevertheless, I thought it might be an interesting way to present some deep-rooted sentiments and better inform the reader of my experiences. While my story may resemble some others that have been told before, it offers some distinct experiences that Hawai’i Samoans can easily relate to. The “story-telling” and “dialoguing with my self” format is designed to be easy to read. In order to create a consciousness of larger academic or artistic issues, in order to grab other young Samoans’ attention, it is often more effective if one shares one’s own trials and ordeals.

Part 2 is the academic and literature review section. This is the section that will put a more scholarly voice in this project with information about both New Zealand and Hawai’i Samoans respectively. I will give very brief overviews of the emigrational origins of our people in both places, and discuss the communities first settled in Hawai’i; I will do a short comparison of the differences between the experiences of Samoans in New Zealand and Hawai’i; and offer a ground-level understanding, or approach to considering why Hawai’i’s Samoans are not as overtly involved as our New Zealand counterparts in this widely proliferating field

of ethnic identity discourse and artistic expressions.

Part 3 is a visual accompaniment to the portfolio. This section will be a collection of photographs and images that will feature current forms of Samoan identity expressions that one can easily come across in Hawai'i. This paper is based primarily on texts, observations, personal experiences and casual conversations, as no formal interviews were conducted. The inclusion of these photographs add not only a discernible component, but it also adds a very personal approach to providing tangible evidence of my observations as well as current situations.

Part 1: The Identity Journey

My soul has been drifting. It was set adrift when as a an eight-year-old girl I left my home in the village of Alamagoto, in Apia, Samoa in 1977. In search of opportunities, my family came to Hawai'i unaware of the realities of success and failure; oblivious of "transitional" complications; unaware of western ideas of hegemony, homogenization and cultural disparities; even unaware of our own Samoan-ness. It sounds so melodramatic and sappy, but I truly feel that my soul has been drifting since. Wandering, meandering with one half of myself rooted in the Samoan culture and the other half looking to fit into the western world. Searching for a place, a va, a space where I could feel comfortable with the person I was, and the person I was becoming. Needing to secure place where I could be at ease to embrace and bring together both my Samoan-ness and the western influences all around me and freely expressing that somehow. There were times when I thought I had found that space—a va where me and my Samoan soul—formed from fragments of the Samoan cultural upbringing, fused

with and influenced by dominant western conceptions and education—could fit in comfortably. Often, and always with regret, it was only temporary. Sometimes, I think that my soul has separated from my person. Sometimes, I feel as though my soul may have strayed so far that I might not be able to retrieve it; strayed because of all the mental, emotional and physical altercations, defensive and offensive reflection, and then condemning or absolving myself of all of these in pensive contemplation.

Oi aue, I swear my soul has drifted forever. Now, I am a mother of three little girls. With the urgency of a concerned parent, I am desperately trying to help my soul find its way, as if that is the key somehow. I look at my children and remember the little girl who left Samoa full of hope, and uncertainty, “dream-chasing” with my family, excited to board an airplane bound for a “better” place, a land of promise. Remembering that little girl, I try with all my mental, emotional and even physical energy to reunite and reconcile my soul with my person. My children are growing quickly. Will they be like me? Will they, too, suffer the “wandering soul” syndrome or worse, have a complete lack of understanding or interest in, possibly even rejecting the Samoan culture? I can already see some ominous indications. My children only understand Samoan, they don’t speak it. Their father and I have been major slackers as far as speaking Samoan to them. Whenever my mother is visiting from Samoa, or his mother is well enough to visit, then there is some brief period of language for my children to benefit from. Can I find that space before my children become old enough to develop feelings of disenchantment towards the Samoan culture which they might be seriously disconnected from? I really don’t know the answers, but finding some

reconciliatory point is my driving force indeed.

My soul must surely have been a happy one as a child. I knew not of the supposed “hardships” of island life under colonialism, western prejudices or transitional difficulties in this new existence. I knew nothing of our so-called impoverishment that distinctively divided us from others. I could not, in a million years, have fathomed the troubling intricacies that paved the road to possibilities, as a “dream-chasing” foreigner in a strange country. But, I can almost be completely certain that despite not having much growing up in Samoa, my soul must have been undoubtedly happy to be, without question, absolutely Samoan during that time.

What would have become of me had I stayed in Samoa? Would I be conscious of my “disadvantaged” situation as a “low-income” minority and single parent as I am here in Hawaii? Is it better to have lived in Samoa all my life, and definitely know just how Samoan I am? (It feels like maybe the answer should be “yes” compared to living in Hawai’i sometimes.) How would my life be if I were living in Samoa right now? Would I be selling taro, bananas or handicrafts at the market place like many of my other relatives? Would I be married to someone my family chose, content to raise my children knowing that they might not be going to school? Or would I be working for just enough money to put food on the table for a day or two, and calling my relatives in the US or New Zealand for additional support? And even if that was the case, would I be aware of it, be unhappy, analyzing and criticizing my island life as I am doing now with my so-called American life? Have I become so colonized that while living in Hawai’i, I envy the Samoan island lifestyle, thinking about the things that have

overwhelmed me in my current existence, wishing to return to a time and place where my soul would not stray—yet, I cannot bring myself to actually return home to Samoa? What keeps me here in Hawai'i? Who am I here and why do I even think about those things? What have I found since the original "dream-chasing" journey to find opportunities began? Questions such as these continue to trouble me. Such are the many uncertainties with few, misleading, ill-informed, sometimes "over-my-head" possible answers that continue to gnaw away at my consciousness. Even when I think I might have found a way to express my own Samoan-ness; my own space, my own va of compromise, comfort and expression, I cannot escape the hemisphere of Samoan cultural do's and don'ts, nor can I ignore the inescapable western half.

Alas, my soul has been drifting, wandering, lost all the while, nearly dying sometimes. But, I have set out to retrieve it, and I think I have almost reached a possible settlement. This paper is my starting point, my va, the space in which I can converse with myself, while informing other Samoans in Hawai'i who might share in the same unsettling journey. This will be my space where I will try to 'find myself' first; find my va of comfort and expression, my much needed space; understand where I came from, where I have been, where I am now and where I want to go as this journey continues. I am attempting to understand how all these things have contributed to the person I am today, using this perception to guide the rest of my journey, now with my children. Most importantly, I want to help my soul find its way back to my person, since I have felt as though I lost it along the way somewhere between acculturation and repression. I hope that when I have sorted out the details of my identity journey, I might find an

enlightened appreciation of the events and situations that caused my disenchanting “soul drift” in the first place. I hope that I will find that my soul has always been here. It’s quite possible that I was never really soul-less at all. It may have been that I got so caught up in the pursuit of opportunities, the “dream-chasing” that my mother and my family consistently remind me about; being too western at times, too Samoan at others, not knowing how to balance the two world views. Maybe I just got so caught up that I began feeling consumed, unconscious, nearly hollow that I felt I almost had no soul.

My name is Lucille Fuamatala Achica. I was born in Faga’alu, Tutuila, American Samoa. I am the eldest of 7 children, raised by a single parent.

My mother is from Upolu and Savai’i, Samoa, and is part German, Niue, Spanish and Filipino. My first name, Lucille, was the name of my mother’s favorite aunt from the Spanish-Filipino-Niue side, her father’s older sister. The name Lucille has two Samoan translations: Lusila and Lusia. Mine is the latter, and I go by Sia. My mom’s father’s name was Fua, and I was given the middle name Fuamatala after him. My last name, Achica, is my mother’s maiden name, and is the only indication of my Spanish-Filipino ancestry. The stories about my grandfather and that side of our family vary greatly, with some versions saying he was half Spanish and half Filipino, and other accounts saying he was adopted by a Spanish merchant marine. I don’t know anything about the Spanish, Filipino or German parts, except for the fact that my last name is obviously not Samoan (the elders in my family don’t like to answer my questions when I start bombarding them in efforts to ascertain some knowledge about our family history). I don’t

understand or speak any of those languages either. I know many of my Niuean relatives, and that somehow gives me the confidence to acknowledge that I am part Niue, even though I have never been to the country.

My mother and father never married. I was the result of a youthful whirlwind romance. Within a few months after I was born, my maternal grandmother whisked me off to Upolu, Samoa where I spent the first eight years of my life, in the village of Alamagoto (so small that if you blink, you'd miss it) in Apia. I don't know my father's family too well, because I met him (and them) when I was 13 years old here in Honolulu; however, I have become well acquainted with many of his family members that live in La'ie, Hawai'i, and have developed some sort of a relationship with my father in recent years.

Much of my childhood was spent on the periphery of our humble abode, and within the village in what seems, now, to be the simplest and most impoverished of conditions. My mother worked in American Samoa and aided us in the form of bi-monthly remittances. Despite my mother's earnest efforts to provide for us, we never quite had enough financial resources with which to afford the newly-introduced necessities.

I left Samoa 30 years ago. The decision to move to Hawai'i was simple enough: (there were only two of us then) my younger sister was 7, I was 8, and we had not been in school yet. Clearly, and sadly, education was one of the new necessities not accessible to me as a result of our perceived "disadvantaged" islander life. The schools in independent Samoa are modeled after the British system, where anyone wishing to educate their children must be able to pay a timely tuition fee. There is no other form of schooling such as the public schools

here in the United States. Needless to say, many of Samoa's children at that time, even now, never attend school, or are dropped from the system when their parents are unable to produce the tuition costs. It was a time when Samoa, like many other Pacific Island countries, was subjected to the imminent pressures of increasing globalization, which left many of our people unable to succeed in our own home countries.

My family was unusually small back then, as compared to other large extended Samoan families. There was my maternal grandmother, her youngest son, my younger sister and me. My grandmother was elderly and spoke no English. All of her children had left Upolu for the booming economies of Pago Pago, Honolulu and San Francisco. My mother worked two jobs in Tutuila, but we were still unable to afford much, especially the school fees for two kids at that time. Sometimes when I think of everything my family endured for the sake of educating us, I become deeply saddened and just cry my eyes out. On the one hand, I am extremely grateful for my mother, aunt and grandmother's love and determination, especially since I, myself, am now a mother of three little girls, the eldest now eight years old. On the other hand, I sometimes find myself considering if life would have been better, simpler, happier if we had never left.

Many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders left our island homes in search of promising opportunities, especially in pursuit of good paying jobs and access to education. In 1977, we had the good fortune of receiving "sponsorship" from my mother's older sister. My aunt had come away to Hawai'i for schooling, found gainful employment and together with her Hawaiian-Japanese husband, saved up enough money to afford airfares for six of us. It would be the start of an

emotionally ambiguous journey that would one day find me as a student at the University of Hawai'i where I would be reintroduced to my Samoan-ness through courses on Samoan pre-colonial beliefs and pre-contact culture and colonialism's effects and changes.

Not so long ago here in Hawai'i, I spent a lot of time in a kind of passive, confused, and conforming state; trying to understand why Samoans were disliked, feared; trying to understand why I felt almost ashamed to admit my own Samoan-ness; even spent some time being anything else but a Samoan in a place where Samoans were regarded as troublesome, un-welcomed, and not to be reckoned with or befriended. I was caught in the most marginal of time and space and virtually without much defense. In a strange, yet not unfamiliar twist of fate, it was my return to school that opened my eyes to a new time; a time of embracing, expressing and assertively exploring and re-discovering a culture in which I was born into, removed from, and re-introduced to.

I came to graduate school convinced that I knew exactly what I was going to do my thesis project on; that the graduate level was where I could really share my thoughts on how the Samoan culture is perpetuated in Hawaii through the Samoan siva, or dance. Each semester, without fail, I wound up in classes that offered so many different, confusing and interesting ideas that I soon found myself changing my topic. So many things happened; so many different turns and changes since I originally set out to do this.

Something unexpected happened in one of my classes one semester as my class was split up into small groups for discussion of the assigned readings. A classmate of mine began arguing for the benefits of colonization that Pacific

Islanders are fortunate to have had...and really shocked everyone in our small group! There were about five of us: a Chamorro from Saipan, a Palauan, a Hawaiian, me (Samoan), and her--the Asian-American surfer from California. The argument was interesting, because this classmate of mine could not understand why the rest of us were unhappy with the subject of colonialism, homogenization, cultural erosion and so forth. We were talking about representations of Pacific people in the media and the like, and it started all of us defending our respective cultures, "bashing" the westerners and "bashing" our classmate for being a western advocate. The "bashing" of my classmate was really mild actually; I did most of mine in my head. I came to realize that this poor student had some major identity issues and really had no idea of who she was and where she came from. It really shook me up enough that I even put myself in her shoes and thought long and hard about how it would be to NOT know where I came from. Thanks to that discussion (and my Asian-American surfer friend who started it) I realized that before I can really put my heart and soul into larger physical efforts of Samoan dance and Samoan cultural perpetuation in Hawai'i, I must first be comfortable with myself and my Samoanness, especially this newly learned topic of diasporic Samoans.

Reflections:

On Being an Outsider in Samoa

Me and my younger sister were raised by my maternal grandmother, Tina, since we were infants. Our mother worked in Tutuila, American Samoa, and sent us money faithfully every month. My father was a local entertainer in Pago Pago, a fire knife dancer, who was quite popular and fancied a number of other female

"friends" while he and my mom were together. When I was born, Tina instructed my mom to prepare herself, as she was coming to take the baby, me, to Upolu. My mother was supposed to remain in Tutuila and continue working so she could help support us. My mother, a loyal daughter, agreed to her mother's bidding, and suppressed any feelings that resembled disobedience. After all, how was she supposed to care for a little baby and work two jobs in Tutuila? She felt she owed it to her mother since Tina had not actually followed through with her threats to disown her for having had a child out of wedlock.

My sister's father was also an entertainer. He was a musician at a popular watering hole in Apia town during the 60's and 70's. My mother met him during one of her visits to see me and Tina. They fell in love immediately and a very short while later, my mother was pregnant. She decided she would not disappoint Tina again; this time, she would marry this man. Tina was pleased with this decision, and agreed for her daughter to take me and move in with her new husband and his extended family. Unfortunately for my poor mother, the happiness only lasted for a few short months. Her new husband liked to drink alcohol quite frequently, and he was also a wife-beater. He continued his music gigs while my mom did just about all the chores in her new in-laws' home. Whenever her husband would finally find his way home, stinking of alcohol, tobacco and the scent of another woman, he would beat my mother while she was pregnant with my sister, simply because she was not awake to have food ready for him. The relationship ended less than one year later, shortly after my sister was born and mother had finally had enough of the beatings and the affairs. She took us to her mother and resumed with the arrangement of working

in American Samoa, sending money, clothes and food to Upolu for us and Tina.

Steadily once a month, a box would arrive filled with some clothes, snacks, biscuits and Wahoo, Tutuila's famed canned tuna fish. Eating Wahoo once a month was a wonderful treat and a break from the usual boiled coconut milk, taro and canned mackerel. Every payday, we received enough money to afford a few things here and there. Sometimes, grandmother would make a trip to the market place and come home with lamb flaps, a can of Hellaby's or some brown sugar. Other times, she would bring Chinese cabbage, string beans and tomatoes to prepare with the canned meat she hid under her bed for special occasions. There were other times when we would have toilet paper and the yellowish multi-purpose soap bar. Always consistent though, was when grandmother got off the bus in front of the house, she would be holding two melting popsicles or milk biscuits for us, as we would run anxiously to greet her.

We learned to perform chores as early as age three or four and became very helpful to our elderly grandmother. Funny thing was, we did not know that our mother was, well, our mother. We seldom saw her, and were accustomed to calling Tina "mama." Every now and then, maybe three or four times a year, a taxi would drop off this beautiful woman, dressed in the most fashionable clothing, always wearing stylish sunglasses and lipstick. We loved it when mother would visit, because we were carried, doted over and given gifts of sweet biscuits and banana chips. Sometimes when there were no chores to do, we sat under the breadfruit tree in the front yard of our humble home and pretended that our mother, the fashionable beautiful woman that we knew her to be, at least, had just pulled up in a taxi. Sometimes we would try to guess what she would

bring as gifts the next time she visits.

Our mother's visits were few and far between. I think she realized that we were growing quickly and we needed to be in school soon. The fees for the two of us, especially since we were 14 months apart, were affordable for others; however, it was not something we could have spared back then. Our household was just grandmother, me and my younger sister. Mother continued to work and saved and sent money in the usual manner, but when I reached school age, there was just not enough money. One year went by, and my sister also reached school age, still there was not enough money even for one of us to go to school. So, when all of our playmates and close by relatives of the same age went to school in their brilliantly colored uniforms, we sat under the breadfruit tree and waved enviously as the other kids passed by on their way to school and back home. Often times, when we waited to greet the kids on their way to and from school, some of the very children we played with called us terrible names. "Dummies!" "Poor people with no money!" "Stupid dumb girls!" It got so bad that some of the meaner kids would throw little stones and pebbles at us, as a sort of sound effect to accompany their "Dummy" chants. One very mean little girl, an afakasi, or half breed who lived across the road from the girls, even sent her dogs to chase after us as we passed by one day. Eventually, the other children, now attending school, no longer played with us. We were viewed as lesser, unfortunate kids, because our family did not have the funds to afford our schooling fees and uniforms. We were considered the most impoverished family in the village.

We continued to watch the school children come and go through the

cracks in the wooden walls of our house so we would not be seen and harassed . Although we realized we were disliked by our former playmates and some cousins, we did not understand why. Weren't they the same children who shared our banana chips and biscuits? Why were our own cousins avoiding us? At the ages of seven and eight we sometimes asked each other questions like that, and decided that we were just going to wait until we would get the chance to go to school. Then we would show them.

One day, mother arrived and announced that she would be taking us on an airplane. We had never really seen an airplane, except for when one would be overhead in the sky. I didn't pay attention to much of anything else, except for entertaining splendid thoughts of being on an airplane. And, soon enough, we were saying our very heartbreaking goodbyes.

When the departure day arrived, I could only think of what an airplane ride must be like. I was excited to imagine myself in school, especially because the kids in our village despised us for not being able to afford an education. I imagined that I would return to Samoa one day so everyone could see that I had been to school in Hawai'i. I don't even remember being sad to leave, because I was so happy to go to Hawai'i. Of course I had no idea where, or what that was.

The old lady could not release her hold on us. I was so impatient that I pleaded with my grandmother to let me go to the taxi, afraid that the car might leave without me. As soon as my poor sobbing grandmother let go of me, I ran as fast as I could to the taxi, climbed in, propped myself up on my knees and waved happily at my tearful mama Tina through the glass window at the rear of the car. I couldn't understand why Tina was so sad to see us go. Wasn't she

happy that we would finally be able to go to school? I remembered that the old lady had prepared us for this day. I remembered that grandmother sat us down after evening prayer a few nights before. Tina had cooked a special dinner that evening, and we feasted on lamb flaps, taro and corned beef with tomatoes. We knew very well at an early age that we only ate that good on certain occasions, and while Tina proceeded to explain what was to come, we ate and listened eagerly.

"My dear children," the old lady began saying, "you will be leaving soon with your mother. The time has come for you to attend school, but we are too poor to afford it." I sat straight up and listened intently as my mama Tina continued to speak. "Your mother's sister has paid for your airfares to go to Hawai'i." Hawai'i? I wondered what that meant? Where is this place? I drifted into thought, imagining this place to be some paradise where everyone went to school and all the children were nice to each other and every family ate lamb flaps and corned beef. I noticed that there were tears in the old lady's eyes now, so I stopped wondering and listened closely again. "My dear children, you will be able to finally go to school. I will pray for you always and I will be here waiting for the day you come home to visit me." I didn't remember anything after that. I couldn't stop thinking about going to school. Sure, I had no idea what exactly went on in a school. Why, I didn't know anything at all, except that the other children in the village went there, and those children disliked us, because we had no money to go there, too. I couldn't wait to go to Hawai'i and be like those kids who were lucky to be in this thing called school.

I remained on my knees, peering out the rear window and watching the

tearful farewell between my grandmother, my mother and my sister. I didn't cry, instead, I smiled and waved enthusiastically at my mama Tina. I watched my mother hug the old lady and wipe her tears away. Mother took hold of my sister's hand and they made their way to the taxi. My mama Tina was still standing there, crying harder now, as the taxi pulled away. I was still unsure why the old lady was crying so hard. That was the last time I was to see my mama in good health. My sister and I giggled and held hands all the way to the airport. This was the best thing that had ever happened to us, we thought. We had never even been in a car before. We never imagined we would actually be leaving to go anywhere with this woman, our mother, our lovely and fashionable idol. I closed my eyes and continued to imagine what school might be like; what a wonderful place Hawai'i must be, to let all the children go to school without paying. I hoped that one day, when I was finished with school, I could return to Alamagoto and see my mama Tina. I especially wanted to show those mean kids that I, too, had gone to school.

Letting Go:

"One of the kids in Samoa that was really mean to us we nicknamed 'panty mumu,' 'red panty' because that was the color of the underwear she wore the day she bent over, lifted up her dress and 'mooned' us. My sister and I were walking back from the little store a few houses away, and we had to pass her house which was diagonally across from ours. She called us names and threw rocks at us and finally sent her dogs to chase us after the whole 'moon' incident. I must have been about 7 and my sister was 6. We started carrying

little stones to defend ourselves against her ferocious dogs, because if she spotted us passing by, rocks would fly and the dogs would come running after us, I am sure they would have bitten us, too, if we weren't quick to pick up stones from the ground and defend ourselves. Anyway, I vowed that if I were to return to Samoa, I would find her and give her the beating of her life no matter how old I might be. I learned from my mother later when I was about 19 and preparing for a trip home (in which I was planning to find her and beat her) that this girl was our relative. I still didn't care if she was our close cousin, I was hoping to find her and beat her for tormenting us the way that she did. But I never met up with her again. I heard later that she was living in New Zealand, so I gave up looking for her whenever I would go back to Samoa. Of all the gosh-darned things, the year before I applied to the CPIS MA program (2006), I found out that tormentor cousin of mine, the one responsible for the 'mooning,' rock-throwing, name-calling and dog-chasing had recently graduated from the CPIS program. I was stunned. It was a little too creepily coincidental that we would both be interested in the same things and attend the same graduate school, majoring in the same field. And realizing this, I forced myself to let go of the anger I harbored all these years. I know, I know...it happened when we were kids and I should have let it go. Hey, I could let some other stuff go, but I couldn't forget what she did. Some of these crazy things that happened to me I am able to let go of, but some things, like that relative of ours doing such horrible traumatic stuff to us, I wasn't able to let go until I was well into motherhood and adulthood. I think I better work a little harder at letting some of these past incidents go already."

On Being a F.O.B: Fresh Off the Boat In Hawai'i

Hawai'i was simply a wondrous and magnificent sight for a little island child to behold. The airport itself appeared as if it were larger than all of Apia. Concrete buildings sprawled everywhere and most of them were taller than the coconut trees in Samoa. The ride to our new home in Kapahulu, a suburb of Honolulu, was a blur, as I began to experience some major motion sickness in the back of a Toyota Station Wagon and threw up everything I ate on the airplane. What stuck out most was the number of cars we saw and the speed of the automobiles on the freeway.

My mother's older sister was an extremely joyous hostess and played the role of a tour guide for us. The women spoke of plans to enroll us in a nearby Elementary school as soon as possible. I felt better when I heard the talk of school again. I grew tired from the plane ride, the motion sickness and rested my head against the car seat, drifting off into a short nap while thoughts of going to school filled my mind.

As an eight year old girl, never having attended school, or coming into contact with anyone who spoke another language besides Samoan, I could not speak or understand English and was without basic skills like writing and reading. Upon successful registration at the nearby school, I was assigned to a grade level behind the children my age, placed in Special Education classes with heavy phonics training until I could transition into a regular classroom. Now that I was finally in this place known as "school," I found myself lost in what I had so often fondly imagined to be a paradisiacal space of acceptance and glorious harmony. Here, I found that the majority of the other children were not in the Special

Education classes that I was in. While I longed to understand and speak English so I could communicate with others, the other children taunted me because I was different. I was what they called a “fob,” a recent immigrant who couldn’t speak and understand English. Luckily, I did not know what they were saying anyway. Thankfully, I had my sister as my constant partner, my co-fob, in these special classes, and we remained each other’s only friend during this most complicated time.

One day I made my very first friend, a Tongan-Samoan girl named, Atelaite. Atelaite spoke English, Tongan and Samoan, and she quickly became close friends with my sister and me. She would serve as our translator in common areas like the playgrounds during recess time, and most especially in the chaotic confusion of the cafeteria at lunch. I really appreciated my first friend Atelaite and was quite thankful we had met her. Through our friendship, my sister and I both began to pick up English quicker, especially when we could actually apply it outside of the classroom environment. Atelaite would translate what other kids were saying to and about us most of the time. Other times, we noticed that she would purposely not interpret what certain kids would say. Instead, Atelaite would yell at those kids protectively and usher us away to another area of the school yard or cafeteria. Perhaps out of pity for us, Atelaite would spare us from the teasing and torment. She sometimes got into several yelling matches with other kids in our defense. Sadly, my family moved homes to a larger house three years later, and I never saw Atelaite again. I credit our ability to be “socially and academically assimilated” to the friendship with Atelaite. I will always remember our very first interpreter and friend outside of

Samoa.

By the time I turned ten and was in the fifth grade, my sister and I had become pretty good at speaking English, along with reading, writing and arithmetic. When we started our new school, we were tested and placed in advanced classes, referred to as courses for the Gifted and Talented students. We both became very competent in the English language, as we had been “assimilated” and successfully transitioned from Special Education classes to regular classroom learning. Or maybe it was because we were determined to one day speak as well, or even better than those children that tormented us. Either way, my sister and I continued to excel in school and maintained A grades throughout 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades. We got so good at speaking English that our own Samoan language began suffering a bit. Whenever our mother spoke to us in Samoan, we were quick to reply in English, without even a second thought.

In the Summer before I started the seventh grade, at age 13, my mother and aunt decided that they would bring my grandmother, mama Tina, to live with us in Hawai'i. The old lady was living alone and didn't have constant companionship or help with the chores, except intermittent visits by some relatives in Fagali'i village nearby. My mom and her sister agreed that despite mama Tina's disapproval, it was far better for them to care for their aging mother in Hawai'i. The reunion--especially for Tina, my sister and me--was as teary and emotional as the farewell had been years before. As soon as mama Tina saw our faces, she cried and kissed and hugged us with all the love that a grandmother could possibly have inside her. Had it not been for mama Tina's

move to Hawai'i, we would surely have not been able to retain our Samoan speech. Unfortunately, mama Tina had developed an illness that I had never heard of called Alzheimer's, which began shortly before she arrived in Hawai'i. We would spend the next ten years caring for my grandmother, and watching the Alzheimer's consume this wonderful, heroic woman along with my entire family.

Stupid Samoan Jokes:

When I was about 12 or 13, I heard a joke about Samoans for the very first time. It went like this: Question--'What do you call a pretty Samoan girl?' Answer-- 'Lucky.' Part 2 went like this: Question-- 'What do you call a pretty girl in Samoa?' Answer-- 'Tourist.' I stared blankly at the boy who told me the joke as he laughed and laughed, nearly choking in the process. It was not funny to me at all, in fact, I felt like reaching out and slapping him. I wondered why that annoying local boy laughed so hard as if that was the funniest joke in the world. I thought about the physical appearance of Samoans for the very first time back then. I was confused about what we were supposed to look like. As I got older, so did that stupid joke. That cursed humorless punch line became something that would fuel some arguments and altercations whenever someone tried to tell it and I was within hearing range of the teller. Of course now there are other jokes that imply that Samoans are dumb and lazy. Local part-Hawaiian comedians and other non-Samoans such as Andy Bumatai, Frank Delima, and Augie T still use Samoans as the butt of their comedic spiels on radio programs, and occasionally on a television special. But the cool thing about these older comics is that they also tell jokes about every other ethnic group here in Hawai'i, especially the

ethnicities they belong to. But, on several occasions, their jokes would sometimes center around the large physical size of Samoans and point toward some inherent inclination for violence. I still really dislike stupid Samoan jokes, though I have learned to appreciate them from time to time and see the humor when it is mixed in with jokes about other ethnicities equally--as sort of an 'equal opportunity ethnic comedy' or something like that.

On Going Home: Not Samoan Enough Anymore

One year, when I was fourteen, I was fortunate to accompany my mother on a trip back home to Upolu, Samoa, to straighten out some documents about the land and home that I grew up in. The complete reason and result of the trip escapes me, except that I was eager to meet up with family members, old playmates, and especially those children that despised my sister and me. I wanted so much to show everyone that I had gone to school; that I learned how to speak English, and pretty well at that. I was even of the mind to confront the mean little girl with the ferocious dogs that used to chase us and the boys that threw rocks at us--so I could show them just how much like them I had become. Things looked so different. Samoa seemed so different than I remembered. Or was it me that had changed so much that I felt so disconnected from this one and only place I had known as a child?

I remember that I had taken a hair dryer and curling iron...two of my absolute favorite of western "tools" with which I used to "modify" my extremely curly, unmanageable and coarse locks. That was a huge mistake! It was so hot that whatever I tried to do with the curling iron and hair dryer, resulted in a disappointing collapse as soon as I was done "fixing" my hair. I remember some

of my relatives making fun of me and my American things and near-palagi (westerner) behavior when it came time to bathe in the pipe with no walls to hide behind, or go to the bathroom outside of the house. In reality, I found myself feeling "grossed out" about the conditions back home. I tried my best not to feel that way. I kept those thoughts to myself, because I am pretty sure that my mother would have given me a swift slap if I dared to express my dislike for the same things that I grew up with.

I sought out and actually found some of the kids I wanted to see. Some of my former playmates, even some cousins had themselves journeyed to New Zealand and the US. The few that I did manage to locate appeared a little uneasy when we first met; in fact, much to my dismay, they were quite uncomfortable around me. Most noticeable was that they treated me as if I were a palagi, a westerner. Some expressed their well wishes, but actually referred to me as 'le teine palagi,' the western girl. I ignored their comments about me being a palagi and continued to visit with some of them whenever I was allowed during the two weeks in Samoa. In spite of everything, I felt more like an outsider; more of an outsider than when I was a little girl--a different sense of being on the outside, nevertheless, there I was--still left out of the same group as I had been before we left for Hawai'i.

An Interesting Trip Home As An Adult:

I visited Samoa in 1998 with my partner before we had children. What stands out most about this trip was that we were not married and unsure of how we would be received. We planned to sleep in separate rooms, as we did not

want to offend any of our relatives, especially my mother who had moved back to Samoa years before. When we got to my mom's house, she prepared a room for the two of us...to sleep together! Whoa! So we were okay with that part, I guess, as long as my mom was okay with it. My mom also gave me a long lecture on how to be a polite Samoan visitor. She instructed me that when we visited my partner's family in Lefaga, Upolu, I was to get myself to the kitchen or outside where they cooked and never ever act like I was some palagi that didn't know how to do real Samoan work. Of course, I already anticipated those kinds of situations and being someone who is an expert at doing Samoan type feaus, the laborious chores that are ingrained in Samoans from the time they can walk and talk, I had no problem with my mother's expectations. What was neat about this trip was I had prepared myself for these chores, the Samoan feaus that I was accustomed to, especially the more arduous forms back in the islands; however, my partner's family would not allow me to come outside to the cooking house or even get up to take my own empty plate after a meal. I felt awkward as though I was not fulfilling my 'proper Samoan' responsibility but each time I tried, my partner's female relatives practically ordered me to remain seated in the family house. I pleaded with my partner to speak to his relatives to let me come and help them, but that didn't work either. So for the few days I spent in Lefaga, Samoa with my partner's family, I was treated like a palagi, a westerner/outsider, but in a different way. They were great and we all became very good friends. I just felt weird about that treatment, although it wasn't necessarily a bad form really.

On Being a “Fia-Palagi” Teenager

My mother always encouraged, even aggressively enforced the use of English, especially in its correct, or standard form. She disliked the local-styled Pidgin English (an old “plantation days” form of speaking English that many local Hawai’i residents continue to use) and it was not unusual for her to physically discipline me if I accidentally slipped with an occasional “da kine” (a local Pidgin expression used to mean “what-cha-ma-call-it”) when I could not remember the name of a person, place or thing. As a result, I would steer onto the straight and narrow path when it came to my speech, specifically when speaking at home. At school, of course, it was easy to relax that rigid practice, as the majority of the students spoke Pidgin English commonly, and I became quite adept at it.

In the intermediate level, grades 7th and 8th, I made many friends in a school where I was one of only three Samoan kids (my sister included). I enjoyed Middle School tremendously, even though my mother would not allow me to participate in sports or other extra-curricular activities. My grades were kept at the “A” level with an occasional “B” in math and science. For the most part though, I was able to blend in, particularly because my being Samoan remained unknown. Although I was not outwardly Samoan in school, I was still very much following the strict cultural regiment that my mother promptly reminded me about as soon as I was home. Things were pretty unruffled , maybe even near-content, until I reached the High School level.

My mother struggled as a single parent. She worked two jobs and applied and qualified for any and all social services programs and state and federal subsidized aid to low-income families. It happened that we qualified for housing

subsidy and found a large four-bedroom house in Palolo Valley Homes, a government housing project for low to moderate income families. I was fifteen and about to start High School after that Summer break. My unruffled, outside-of-my-house world as I had tried so hard to build came crashing down hard on me when I came into contact with the shocking majority of the housing project's residents--other Samoans. There are not enough words to explain my downright amazement when I learned that the Samoan kids my age, in their expression of utter contempt for me and my siblings, circulated horrible rumors that I was a "fia palagi" (wanna-be-white) Samoan; and even threatened that one day they would teach me a lesson for being so "fia palagi." I was totally beside myself with disbelief, and I spent many days dodging other Samoans; and if I was unlucky enough to spot someone, I ducked quickly into a store, sat down at a bus stop, or walk with a group of people I didn't even know; just so I wouldn't be alone and be confronted by one of the mean Samoan kids that disliked me. Unfortunately for me, and just as the rumors suggested, on the first day of school in my sophomore year, I was badly beaten up in a way that is referred to as mobbing, where more than one person participated in the beating process. I found out later as I sat in the Principal's office that my sister, a ninth grader in her first day of High School, was beaten by the same girls just minutes before they found and attacked me. That was the beginning of my "problem child" phase when I began physically fighting with other Samoan teenaged girls in school because they viewed me as a wanna-be-palagi--based on the surface facts that I spoke "standard" English in my classes and seldom "hung out" with other Samoans. No one knew that my inability to "hang out" was due in large part to my being the

eldest child and the many responsibilities I was charged with. In that stage of my life, I literally had to fight other Samoans to prove and defend my own Samoanness. I soon learned which clique of Samoans was the “ruling class” on campus and started being able to hold my own against the aggressive and often territorial Samoan girls in High School, eventually finding the edge I needed to overcome the fear of being mobbed again. Regrettably, I started becoming rebellious by cutting classes, getting arrested for truancy, wrecking my grade point average and grades altogether, and even daring to defy my mother’s instructions and expectations by casting aside the Samoan cultural regiment she had conditioned me to live by. My mother was outraged at my quick accumulation of demerits and detention and blamed my defiant disobedience on the negative influences of the questionable company I was keeping. After several attempts to “rehabilitate” me with the severe physical discipline that is often most Samoan adults’ parental recourse, my mother sent me off to live with her brother in East Palo Alto, near San Francisco, California when I was sixteen.

My Mother’s Solution:

My mom had a sort of generic ‘Samoan’ solution for any trouble that we were in or trouble we caused. Because I was the eldest, I got the worst beatings. I sometimes even got beat when my siblings messed up. I got so used to it that my mom would have to find different things with which she used to hit me, because after a while the belt didn’t really hurt me anymore. That’s the reason she sent me away to California. She was becoming troubled at my rising tolerance for the belt lashings, and I think she was acutely aware of the fact that I

was getting older and she was having to hit me so often when I developed a tolerance for the shoe, the slipper or the belt.

So back to the point about my mom's solution...Back to the day that I got mobbed by three Samoan girls in school. The school's staff called my mother at work and informed her of what had happened while they detained me, my sister (whom the same three Samoan girls had mobbed before me that same morning) and the culprits in the Vice Principal's office. My mom could not come to pick us up, instead, she consented for us to take the bus home, since now we were suspended from school, and we would speak when she was finished with work. The bus ride home seemed unusually long for us. We knew that we were in a lot of trouble and we barely said a word except some bad talk about those three girls we barely knew. We cleaned the entire house spotless in the hopes it would lessen the lashings from the belt we were certain we were getting. The time flew by and before we knew it, my mom was home.

My mother was silent as she walked in and went straight to her room. She came out a couple of minutes later after she quickly changed out of her work clothes and shocked us, especially me, by saying that we were going to go to each of these girls houses (they all lived in the government housing project we lived in) and I was going to fight them one by one while she stood by to make sure no one interfered, even if it meant that she herself would fight with the girls' parents. She must have noticed the look of panic on my face, because she turned around and threatened that if I did not fight and beat those girls, I would be getting the beatings from her. My siblings and I were just shocked, but I was in no position to refuse, or even negotiate. And we did just that: we went to the

first girl's house, called her and her parents out and my mother, in her rage, yelled and explained our visit. Back then, Samoan parents saw nothing wrong with that kind of stuff though. That girl's parents were upset at her for participating in the mobbing, they also knew my mother, and they allowed us to fight right in front of their house. Of course I didn't want the beatings from my mother, so I fought and beat her. We went to the second girl's house and they wouldn't come out of their house. The third girl lived across from that second one, and so after swearing in Samoan because the second girl wouldn't come out, my mom turned and began calling out the third girl's family. It happened that the third girl's parents recognized my mom from back home in Tutuila and thankfully, they settled the matter by apologizing on behalf of their daughter and then beating their daughter themselves. Whew! That is one defining moment I will never forget! After that day, I told myself that if I ever got into a fight again at school, I will either win or not get caught if I lost, because my mother was sure to carry out her form of discipline one way or another. That was the start of many more fights with other Samoan girls. And the most ironic part of that whole situation is that those three girls and I became friends afterwards and we remain friends till this day."

On Being Too Samoan In California

While my mother was quite practiced in physically disciplining us, she was convinced somehow that my teenage insurgence and blatant disregard for the cultural "regiment" had come about partially because I had no father that could better physically discipline me. Yes, sadly, my mother had also begun to adopt

some western ideas, in this case, the “absent father” or father figure was now added to the blame (along with the choices of friends, of course) for her good daughter gone bad. I was sent to live with her older brother in East Palo Alto (EPA), California, considered a “ghetto” by the town’s own people. EPA’s residents were primarily extremely marginal minorities, mainly African-Americans, Hispanics and a rising population of Samoans and Tongans. This California experience was totally interesting, and I discovered another side of the identity struggle that would further throw me into confusion. In all honesty, I quickly found that I was too Samoan. Is there such a thing? Apparently, in mainland communities where some Samoans are not actively practicing our culture, there is. Okay, maybe this sounds strange, at least to me, that is. But it is the truth. There were a few Samoans living in the neighborhood, and most that I met in school were barely able to speak our language, having distinctly urbanized accents and obvious western worldviews. This was also true of the few Tongan teenagers that I met or befriended. The wonderful thing about the Samoan and Tongan teens I knew in California was simple: whenever we came together at school, we were all friends, regardless of our ethnicities; I think they rather enjoyed that I was very Samoan.

I spent almost three years living with my uncle and his wife and children in California and while I did enjoy the harmonious environment in school with the other Samoan kids and my Tongan friends, I wanted so much to come back to Hawai’i. California was not a place for me. I knew it when I stepped out of the airplane, I knew it everywhere I looked, and I knew it every time I met a Samoan teen who was unable to speak our language. So, I managed to do some catch

up work to repair my grades enough to satisfy the minimum requirements to obtain a High School diploma and graduated in 1987. Soon after, I called my mother and reassured her that I was now “rehabilitated” and ready to return home and resume my “regiment.” My mom was ecstatic, but refused to let me hear it in her voice, because she desperately needed help with my younger siblings and aging grandmother, yet, she needed to be sure that I had mended my ways and ready to resume the cultural regiment. I returned to Hawai’i within a week of that phone call.

Reinforcing Samoan Language In California Of All Places:

“This is an example of unusual life-shaping events: In California, I lived with my mother’s older brother, his Tongan wife and their six female children. My uncle spoke Tongan fluently and my aunt spoke Samoan. My aunt’s mother and grandmother were both alive and well, also living with us. Those two women didn’t speak English, but were fluent in Samoan along with their Tongan language. So there I was, now assuming the eldest child role in this new setting. I barely spoke English, except at school, instead, I learned to communicate in the Tongan language as well as sharpening my Samoan a bit more in California, of all places! The few friends I kept in touch with here in Hawaii expected to hear a “Californian” accent when I returned. It is not unusual for many young Samoans to visit the mainland for a few weeks or months and return flaunting a sudden “Californian” accent, the mostly Ebonics version used by most California youth (most of us in Hawai’i make fun of those who do that!). But when I returned and I was sharper than most of them in Samoan, as well as being able to speak

Tongan fairly well, my friends and family were shocked and impressed...frankly, so was I. It has been many years since I've spoken Tongan, though, and I've been reduced to trying to listen for key words I remember well. But that was one of the coolest things that happened as a result of my banishment."

On Being Pan-Polynesian

I have always loved dancing. My first teacher was my grandmother, and I was about three years old when she would teach me to dance as she sang to no music. We didn't have television, of course, and we had this old, staticky transistor radio that received only one station. My grandmother's singing without musical accompaniment, while she taught us her graceful style of the siva, the Samoan art of dance, became our favorite form of entertainment, past time and "cultural lesson." My mother and father were both dancers. Despite the little leisurely time with which my mother had to spend with us, she always managed to "force" all of us to dance when she was home. I guess it would be safe to say that dancing was our family time, our bonding time and our cultural time. Performing the siva Samoa at family gatherings was one of my duties as the eldest, and I looked forward to it each time. It gave me a sense of confidence, linked me to my childhood in Samoa and made me feel close to my family in a powerful, yet calming way. It was no surprise to my relatives when I landed my first professional dancing job with one of Hawai'i's biggest entertainment production company. I worked as a Polynesian dancer for that entertainment company's prominent Waikiki Polynesian Revue, a West Oahu Luau show and as a "free-lance" Polynesian dancer for three other production companies as a

young adult between the ages of eighteen to thirty.

“Working” as a Polynesian performer didn’t really feel like actual work, at least not in the physically- demanding, arduous sense. That big entertainment company I first worked for (for nearly ten years) was owned by a part-Samoan family, and as such, employed several talented musicians, singers and dancers of Samoan ancestry. In fact, some of our best shows of that era happened during the evenings when we were an all-Samoan cast. Work was so much fun that sometimes I felt like maybe it was unusual for me to love my job so much.

When I started with this job, I had never really had too much exposure to things beside my family, the fa’asamoa, other cultural responsibilities, and to others in my neighborhood and school. There was never a place where I felt okay to express myself the way I wanted to. Being a performer, an entertainer for Hawai’i’s booming tourism industry, I was suddenly taken from a limited-exposure-situation and thrown on stage in front of several hundreds of people nightly. It was the experience of a lifetime that gave me courage and encouragement; it exposed me to a life outside my household and my family’s expectations; and provided me with a place where I could fit in comfortably, instead of always feeling like an outsider. I learned to grow up in the conventional manner, and in the intangible sense that I would not have otherwise been able to do had I simply continued living with my usual, limited, obedient unrelenting Samoan cultural regiment.

The interesting thing about being a Polynesian dancer, besides the beautiful costumes and makeup, were the traveling perks that came with the territory. I was fortunate to have traveled to all the neighboring Hawaiian islands,

parts of Asia like Japan and Singapore, and the mainland USA to perform in places like New York City, Orlando and Fort Myers in Florida, Boston, Washington DC, Idaho, Chicago, New Jersey, Texas and California. Even more interesting was the way that our dancing troupe promoted Hawai'i's multiple Polynesian cultures simply under the idea that it was Hawai'ian culture. I enjoyed my time during my dancer days, because not only did I have a great time growing up and experiencing new things and places, more importantly, I found the place I had always longed for in which I felt, for the first time, a true sense of belonging. It became my favorite escape, especially when I would apply the heavy stage make-up and put on the fabulous show costumes. It was the perfect place, with the perfect disguise, and I assumed a new Polynesian identity. I loved that I had a different identity, a Pan-Polynesian me, and I held onto this modified, evolved and encompassing identity dearly. My professional dancing days ended along with my beloved Pan-Polynesian identity guise abruptly because of some personal issues that complicated my life back then. Maybe it was a combination of distress over the personal problems combined with having lost the comfort space I had as a dancer, I again found myself in a state of purgatory, almost as though I needed that Pan-Polynesian me more than I wanted to acknowledge the Samoan me. Lucky for me, a new more secured identity would develop when in my early thirties I became pregnant with my eldest daughter. I was faced with the realization that I needed to restore my Samoan self so I can pass on the culture, explain the same perplexing situations I had lived through, and help my own child through the difficulties she may face as a Samoan in Hawaii.

"Its okay...We're from Hawai'i"

"I spent about ten years at my first job out of high school working for a company in a popular Waikiki hotel, hosting anywhere from 200 to 500 tourists and locals twice nightly. I worked really hard to make the traveling promotions group, because I wanted to 'see the world,' of course, and after about two years, I made the promotional team. This team of 'elite' dancers often performed for Hollywood movie stars and producers, big corporations like Pepsi, M&M Mars, Coca Cola, and others. We were even featured on shows like the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Good Morning America along with other movies, commercials and television shows that were filmed in Hawai'i. One year, we were hired to perform for a private golf club, the LPGA in Fort Meyers, Florida. There were ten of us female dancers who went on that week long trip. We were as excited as young girls could be to be staying in a fancy resort, and the next morning after we arrived, we hit the swimming pool to take advantage of the 'vacation' we were on. Picture this: ten Polynesian females. Six of us were Samoan. The other four were Hawaiian-mixed blood. We all went to the swimming pool with brushed out, big Polynesian hair, brown skin draped with lavalava, a type of wrap-around fabric popularly used by Pacific Islanders. The white women looked absolutely shocked that people like us were actually using the resort's facilities alongside them. The elder women seemed afraid and gathered closely in a huddle, whispering and staring at us. The guests were all gathered for this women golfers' convention that we were supposed to perform for. Most of the Caucasian women were older, appeared to be wealthy, and probably lived most of their lives in their own little communities with others like them, never having seen

Polynesians until that day. Then the funniest thing happened: someone from the resort staff announced over the sound system that we were a group of Hawaiian entertainers that flew all the way to Florida to perform for their convention. And just as fast as you could blink your eyes, the expressions on the women's faces changed from disapproving to total awe and admiration! Many of them even came and took pictures with us by the poolside. I heard one older white lady say something like, 'Well, I didn't know you were Hawaiians. Is this how you dress all the time?' She was referring of course to the sarongs each of us wore to the pool. Apparently, now that they thought we were all Hawaiians, it was okay that we could use the facilities alongside them. Being Hawaiian and dancing the hula was a big thing for these women, and they went crazy taking pictures during our actual performance."

On Restoring My Samoan-ness After Motherhood

To be clear, I did not completely ignore or suppress my Samoan-ness throughout. In all honesty, it is way too difficult to do such a thing, for me at least, because I have always been quite Samoan when situations required for me to be. My mother and family would never allow me to disregard certain responsibilities when it came to matters of fa'asamoa such as those surrounding the ever-present fa'alavelave, familial and cultural obligations. Being Samoan and the degree of Samoan-ness just became contextual and I got pretty good at choosing when, where and how much Samoan I was going to be, particularly when I was at work, school or just out with a group of different ethnic friends. At home, with my Samoan friends and in the Samoan community, I still participated in ceremonial protocol and led some Samoan-focused discussions,

presentations and performances in family gatherings, church and Samoan community events. Although there were indeed times when I disliked sticking out as a Samoan when I was younger, the time I spent as a Polynesian entertainer helped me to restore a sense of pride in my heritage. All of the different companies and shows I worked for featured the art of Samoan fire knife dancing as the grand finale. Also, the common highlight of Polynesian Revues just before the finale was a Samoan dance section, and often I was chosen to perform the taualuga solo, the dance usually done by a taupou, a chief's daughter that signified the culmination of many Samoan social activities. Interestingly, tourists and locals alike enjoyed the Samoan performances, and flocked to take photos with me and the fire knife dancer after each show. Of course explaining exactly where Samoa was on the map to some of them was another story; nevertheless, I appreciated the fact that people took a seemingly great interest in the Samoan culture, even if it was the "performance show" type they paid for as part of a hotel and tour package to visit Hawai'i. In hindsight, the many years I spent as a Polynesian dancer, enjoying a Pan-Polynesian identity, helped to repair whatever part of my Samoan spirit had been "broken" during my transitional period as a child and adolescent. In fact, it prepared me well for the next phase of my identity journey: embracing my Samoan-ness and teaching my children about who we are.

Any mother can tell you that whatever trials and tribulations a woman may have experienced or considered challenging in life is minor compared to childbirth and assuming a responsible, nurturing parental role. Anything that I might have found emotionally and mentally injurious no longer mattered, as I

came to the realization that I needed to straighten up my “act” if I was to be a good mother. I knew that I was going to have to teach my child about the Samoan culture, my life and our other relatives in Samoa. Most importantly, I needed to be there to help her understand the way people were, in the way that my mother wasn’t able to do for me as a child.

Almost all of my Polynesian dancer friends, of which the majority were Samoans and part-Samoans, who had also become mothers sent their daughters off to halaus, Hawaiian dance or hula schools. Some of the halaus I know of also include in their repertoire Tahitian dance; there are also Tahitian dance groups that take children from ages three and up. Most of my friends, even many of my Samoan pals, send their kids to learn to dance Tahitian and Hawaiian. While there is no Samoan equivalent, except for fire knife dancers in Laie, many of the new generation of Hawaii-born Samoan children are experts in dancing the Tahitian tamure, and the Hawaiian hula, even the Maori poi ball dance. I was not going to be one of those. I wanted my daughter to first learn of her Samoan-ness like I did when I was a child. I even took her to Samoa when she was almost two years old. My daughter learned to speak some Samoan during our three month stay and would dance alongside my mother or me whenever we would call her to siva. As much as I had tried my best with my eldest daughter, when I had the other two, I was already caught up in school, a separation and community projects, leaving little time to focus on teaching them with the passion I had when there was just one. Now, they are ages seven, four and three. They don’t speak Samoan, but they understand and respond in English. My daughters are very Samoan in appearance, because their father is

also Samoan. I can already hear my eldest child complaining about having curly hair and wishing for hair like the palagi girls on television or the Barbie doll she has. Sometimes when I can get them to, they mimic me when I dance to some of my favorite Samoan songs now and then. But, I look forward to completing things I started and focusing on being there for them, if only to spare them from the same confusing experiences I had. If I can help them appreciate their Samoan-ness without shame or regret, while learning western tools to succeed in our Hawaiian home, I will have the most rewarding accomplishment.

Perpetuating The Samoan Culture Through Grass Roots Efforts:

“So about three years ago, I joined a very new organization of Samoans, the United Samoan Organization of Hawai'i, or USOH as it is popularly known among the Samoan community. The membership is comprised primarily of Samoans and part-Samoans from my generation and younger. The mission of the group, now an official non-profit, tax exempt organization, is to promote an awareness of the Samoan culture in Hawai'i among the youth through song and music, while bridging the communal and social gap by encouraging members to participate in a wide range of community events. Some of these community events include educational activities that encourage post-secondary education, community-building efforts of other non-profit organizations and charities, and participation through performances for Samoan and Polynesian cultural festivals. Over the past few years as a member of USOH, I have undergone a significant resurgence of great pride in my Samoan culture. I have been an active participant in the group's committees, particularly the annual cultural scholarship

pageant that awards over \$10,000.00 yearly in cash and prizes to Samoan female participants enrolled in Hawai'i-based universities and community colleges. I am also the group's unofficial community liaison and have taken contestants on a regular basis to the offices of the Mayor of Honolulu and the Governor of the state of Hawai'i. I am enjoying so much my new role as a representative for my generation and younger, especially when I am responsible for introducing young Samoans to the leaders of our community and state. In the year 2007, our entire group made a trip to Tutuila, American Samoa and toured/performed for all the public high schools and several villages as part of a cultural revitalization mission. Many of the younger members had never been to Samoa so it was a joy indeed to have been there with them for their first journey 'home' to the islands most only know of from their parents and families, but have never actually visited. USOH hopes to have more trips back 'home' for the cultural familiarization of those who haven't been to Samoa, and strengthening and reinforcement for those who seldom visit."

Concluding Part 1

My family made some difficult sacrifices so that we could "come to Hawai'i and go to school, get a better life, and make something of ourselves," as my mother likes to remind me more often than I would like. I wonder if they would have still brought us here if they knew then what I know now. We knew nothing about colonialism and decolonization (these things one learns about in post-secondary institutions), nor were we even aware of its effects. No one could have possibly foreseen that our Samoan culture and our very Samoan-ness would one day come into question; and worse, no one knew that those things

would have a problematic impact on the very children they sacrificed for; leading to a point where one of my siblings has cut off all ties and disowned our family, one sibling is in federal prison, and two of us would repeat the single parenthood that my mother struggled so hard to have us avoid.

My dual position might be because I am the eldest with the most memory of life back home and the most responsibilities; or it could just be that I have come upon an inescapably stark realization of our lives as “outsiders” both in and out of Samoa. At any rate, I have always been in a position of juggling two cultures; of having my own personal, mental, on-going positionality debate; of seeing two sides when my siblings refused to; of having one foot in the western world and the other in the Samoan culture and lifestyle. I have become my mother’s “right hand” in a lot of ways. I have accepted my unofficial role as the “glue” that strives to keep my siblings together in my mother’s absence, though admittedly, it’s one of the worst responsibilities I ever took on. I am also one that is extremely thankful for every little thing I have. I am not, by any means, someone who is fortunate to have what the majority of others might have; however, I know I have more than many in my extended family residing back in Samoa. I remember growing up with hand-me-down everything and second-hand anything, but still having more than others in Samoa. I remember being upset when my mother would not allow me to play much as a child, because of the chores and responsibilities that I automatically had as the eldest child raised by a single Samoan parent. I also remember vividly the many contemplative moments I spent trying to sort out my angry feelings, not at all understanding the “why’s and how come’s”, but still concluding that it was just the way life was as a

Samoan. I even remember stifling strong wishes to be anything but a Samoan when I was younger. Such situations complicated by negative social interaction and conflicts with peers, in addition to other occurrences beyond my grasp at that time, led to the early formations of ambivalent, near anti-Samoan thoughts and opinions, critical cultural assessments, and repressed reservations, sometimes downright resentment of my own Samoan-ness, leaving me yearning for some space that I could fit, blend and express my Samoan roots in my western environment.

People go back to colleges and universities for so many reasons. Most of them seek advancement in their careers; some pursue knowledge; and still others search for a sense of accomplishment. Me, I came back because I got lost. Somewhere between the simplistic island life of an innocent, impressionable little girl and the harsh reality of life's hardships that consumes a woman, I lost myself. A few years ago, I laughed if I heard that someone was "trying to find his or her self." I mean, it is a funny thing to say, after all, at least it was to me several years ago. I heard it first on television, of course, on a soap opera that my sisters and I were addicted to in our late teens. I thought it was a palagi, or western idea, because surely, no Samoan would ever be caught dead saying that they were "trying to find themselves." So, you might say that I got caught up in a palagi world. You might even say that I was palagi-fied, westernized, colonized. But I have told you the story; a look into the life of a Samoan girl who wanted nothing more than to find the liminal space, the va. I have shared with you my own journey from Samoa to Hawai'i; to the mainland USA and back to Samoa. Can you see the struggles and hardships not simply of

a Samoan girl growing into womanhood outside of Samoa, but of colonialism and its impact? This is an account of a never-ending struggle to fit in; of acculturation and its prejudices and the effects of these challenges on the identity of a young, determined and unwavering spirit trying merely to adjust to a new culture; still trying to find the right place to nurture a crumbling Samoan identity.

This is a collection of some of my life's most defining moments; some significant events that try as I may, I cannot forget; this is my identity journey. I hope that it will illustrate my interest in the area of identity and expressions thereof amongst the Samoan diaspora here in Hawai'i where I have lived for over thirty years now. Most of all, I hope that I can help to guide the drifting souls of other Samoans who might feel the same confusion; who may not be aware of such underlying themes and situations; or those Samoans who never really thought about it until now. *Fa'afetai tele mo le avanoa. Fa'afetai tele mo le valenei ua maua. Thank you for giving me this avenue. Thank you for allowing me this va.*

Se Tala Mai Hawai'i: Reflections on Being Samoan in Hawai'i

I. Part II: Towards an Understanding

It feels like a lifetime ago (or someone else's life) when I reflect my experiences and observations as a Samoan youth adjusting to a new life in Hawai'i. The most startling realization is recalling vividly the adolescent crisis of coming to terms with and acknowledging the inescapable reality that was my Samoan-ness—belonging to the then most recent group of immigrants arriving in Hawai'i. Although the “crisis” felt like it was only happening to me and my family at that time, three decades have passed, and I have witnessed and been subjected to various western assimilation and acculturation processes, whereby I have come to know others who share my troubling journey. Some indigenous people of the Pacific, in the diaspora and their respective island countries (for example, the Maori of New Zealand and Hawaiians), are now participating and encouraging a contemporary movement towards cultural preservation. This movement has enlightened me, and has created a consciousness of colonial and empirical legacies that have fashioned our present day situations. I am now more informed and know that I was not alone in my adolescent, and perhaps still persisting cultural identity dilemma.

As the eldest child responsible for many chores, including serving visitors, I was inadvertently privileged to many discussions that the adults in my family held, most of which centered on Samoan behavioral “do's and don'ts” in public, non-Samoan spaces. In hindsight, there were many admonitory conversations between my mother, some relatives and other Samoan parents in

the late 70's and 80's. Relatives that had moved to Hawai'i a few years before us advised my mother against our dressing too Samoan, especially against wearing an *'ie lavalava* (sarong/fabric wrap) in places other than at home. Other times, I would overhear reproachful sentiments and disapproving talk of some poor "backward" Samoan who had been spotted by another, more "acculturated" Samoan in the grocery store, or the local McDonald's fast food restaurant, wearing an *'ie lavalava*. Thirty years ago, that was my dismal reality; trying to blend in and get by unnoticed by both non-Samoans and Samoans; covering up my own personal, yet seemingly Samoan quirks such as smoothing the frizz in my coarse hair, so as not to bring attention to my Samoan-ness; and keeping to the strict cultural upbringing at home, while adequately learning the ways of the "others" in school in order to fulfill the hopes and dreams of my family. It is clear, in retrospect, that we were caught in a time and place, in the space of "others" in which being Samoan and expressing that Samoan-ness, even in everyday appearance, dress, attitude and behavior was definitely not okay. Years later, I now find myself considering some ways that we Samoans in Hawai'i express an ethnic identity that may have been overlooked in our adjustment attempt. What are some reasons for the early identity suppression? Why is it okay, now, to consider that Samoan ethnic and cultural identity? In what ways do Hawaii-based Samoans express ethnic identity? Later, I will discuss some significant points that might help to understand these questions.

For twenty of the thirty years since moving to Hawai'i, I have lived in Waipahu, a town located in the central-western area of Oahu island where it is quite common to run into another Samoan. Generally speaking, I have become

very familiar with Oahu towns such as Kalihi, Honolulu, Laie, Kahuku, Hau'ula, Nanakuli, Waianae, Makaha, Wahiawa and Kaneohe, as well as Waipahu and some others in which Samoan migrant enclaves have either long been established, or are quickly increasing. Thirty or even twenty years ago, it would have been practically impossible for me to point out exactly which areas on Oahu had a Samoan population besides the government's public housing projects, that is. Samoans during that earlier time of movement and transition probably attempted to "assimilate" rather inconspicuously as did my family and some others. Today, the Samoans in Hawai'i are seeing some changes as gradual socio-cultural "acceptance" has allowed for a more overt adjustment process. In a sense, as we are becoming more acculturated, we are being more accepted as part of the state of Hawai'i's own claim to be a "melting pot" of cultures. As the years go by, I am finding it easier, more comfortable, and indeed pleasant to be myself, a Samoan, no longer hiding my Samoan-ness, when not so long ago it did not seem that way.

In the late 1970's till the mid-late 1980's, Samoan families such as mine encountered difficulties associated with migration and specifically complications in adjustment. Many Samoans were unskilled or semi-skilled and oblivious of transitional, social and other complex issues that would inevitably be problematic in adapting to a host society. With almost no knowledge of Samoans, the local Hawai'i population was ill-prepared to understand or accept the advent of the migrants. As Samoans started settling into local communities, they were viewed unfavorably and stereotyped because of their culturally-rooted practices that appeared to be a substantial obstruction to acculturation. Being

identified as a Samoan during that time, then, was often an undesirable and negative aspect that served to thwart cultural and ethnic identities in that uneasy adjustment period. Hawai'i's systemic acculturative processes kept the "undesirable" identity aspects at minimum, while working to aid in the successful assimilation and educating the local population about the newcomers. This was the reality of the immigrant situation that Samoans such as my family experienced. This was among the circumstances which led to early ethnic and cultural identity being suppressed.

Currently in Hawai'i, Samoans have been moving towards expressing overt pride in cultural and ethnic identity, especially pride for other successful Samoans. In fact, anyone who has visited with Samoan friends or family in any of Hawai'i's Samoan communities has quite likely noticed the same inclinations. Those same observations become even more apparent during Samoan cultural performance festivals at Honolulu's Keehi Lagoon (a public park usually associated with Samoans, as its utilized for large scale cultural celebrations, cricket and rugby games) and the Samoan performing arts festival held yearly in Laie, Oahu at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Those observations I am referring to is the immensely popular contemporary Samoan music by New Zealand artists, particularly the vocal stylings of the groups *Pacific Soul* and the upbeat tempo of *Jamoa Jam*—usually played at super high volumes in people's cars, over the sound systems at cultural festivals, in people's private residences and now used as cellular telephone ring tones. Embraced, also, by Hawai'i's Samoans is New Zealand's dynamic duo of comedy, Ete and Tofiga, the *Laughing Samoans*. Almost every Samoan family I know personally has at

least one DVD or video recording of the New Zealand-based duo's hilarious sketches. Another New Zealand Samoan favorite, perhaps the very first, for that matter, is the renowned author Albert Wendt's writings. Members of the older generation, such as my mother's older sister, take great care of their Albert Wendt books as if they are family heirlooms, displaying them in glass cases, especially if they have been autographed, seldom allowing anyone to go near them. Another example is the film *Samoan Wedding* which is now available at the local Blockbuster video rental store, or may be purchased at one of the Korean-owned "Polynesian" stores that stock up on things Samoan, Tongan and Micronesian. For instance, as recently as one week ago, I was at Tammy's Polynesian Market (*Tammy's market is the most popular, Korean-owned, "Polynesian" store on Oahu, known island-wide by Samoans and non-Samoans to be the best producers of cooked Samoan food, and the leading "under-the-table" employer of a mostly-Samoan work crew*) in Waipahu and curiously asked about the price of the *Samoan Wedding* DVD advertised on a poster on the store's wall. The Korean owner informed me that they had sold out and advised me to inquire with their Kalihi (in Honolulu) branch, as they had just received a new order. That little bit of information confirmed that the New Zealand produced film was still hugely popular even though it has been a few years since it originally came out.

The important point about these observations is that Hawai'i's Samoan population has embraced whole heartedly the various artistic identity expressions produced by New Zealand Samoans, and rightly so (I, too, am quite proud of my own collection of *Jamoa Jam* and *Pacific Soul* CDs, as well I am of

my two Albert Wendt books). We have, at least for the last decade, basked in the success of our New Zealand counterparts, applauding their progressive and artistic productions. Their various styles of creative cultural identity expressions have been “adopted” by us here (and probably by some Samoans elsewhere) as we seem to perceive these accomplishments vicariously as a triumph for Samoans overall—as well we should, for that is our collective, spiritedly proud and supportive nature—and that is indeed a victory for the Samoans together. However, as we have celebrated in the achievements of New Zealand-based Samoans, we also seem to have accepted their expressions as a universal representation for all. By this I mean that we Samoans here in Hawai‘i, as a result of an “imagined” success through the agency of New Zealand Samoans, now appear marginalized in the area of creative, academic and artistic cultural and ethnic identity expressions. Why is there no attempt from Hawai‘i’s Samoans to participate in an artistically expressive arena that has seen the successes of New Zealand Samoans? Is there evidence of Hawai‘i’s Samoans expressing their Samoan-ness?

This paper seeks to shed light on pervading questions that I have often pondered trying to understand why Hawai‘i’s Samoans are not involved in ethnic and cultural expressions such as the academic, literary and artistic movement initiated, expanded, popularized and still dominated by New Zealand Samoans. A discussion and reflections on primarily Hawai‘i-based studies along with some dominant discourses in New Zealand literature on Samoans will be paramount in establishing the academic framework for this paper. Some comparative reflection will help to gain an understanding of the Samoan situation in Hawai‘i,

with the focus on perceptions of Samoans prevalent in local literature or studies. A brief overview of Samoan migration to both Hawai'i and New Zealand, current sociocultural situations and/or distinctions that either support and encourage New Zealand Samoans (henceforth referred to as NZ Samoans) or clearly absent for/in the Hawai'i Samoan (henceforth referred to as HI Samoan) case. I will include four commonly observed types of expressions through which the contemporary generation of HI Samoans convey their pride in and assert their cultural and ethnic identity. These forms of identity expressions are meant to include those HI Samoans born, raised and educated in Hawai'i, regardless of their degree of Samoan-ness. This project, therefore, shall consider ways in which a modern, diasporic Samoan identity is generally conveyed.

Most of the time I will utilize information observed, experienced and “gathered” over the last 30 years of living as a diasporic Samoan in Hawai'i—a lifetime of ethnographic observations, if you will—in addition to available sources. Of particular interest which must not go without noting is the small amount of material and information acknowledging forms of HI Samoans' identity expressions. The literature survey will be used to elucidate the HI Samoan case towards understanding the local situation as compared to NZ Samoans. In a further attempt to ascertain any form of HI Samoans' expressions of cultural identity, personal observations, personal communications, ideas expressed through casual conversations and photographic evidence of identity manifestations among the contemporary generation will be included.

To be clear, first, this is not an easy task, as there are many factors that

contribute to this ambiguous kind of topic. There are intricate Samoan customs and institutions, such as *aiga* (family), *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way) and *matai* (chiefly) systems, in addition to language, religion and other cultural "traditions" that complicate the interpretation of identity in the diaspora. This study will be limited to determining a progression towards identity expression, and not the factors that constitute identity. I am in search of evidence that show HI Samoan's movement towards articulating their Samoan-ness. The limitations of this project will probably create a generalized view of the HI Samoan case; however, I hope that if that is the case, others in Hawai'i will produce further studies and give rise to the issue at hand. It is the bottom line, after all, to create an awareness for HI Samoans, particularly the contemporary diasporic generations to produce some of our own studies, literature, and artistic creations as those Samoans in New Zealand have successfully done.

As I was geared towards bringing the HI Samoans into wider identity discourses, and possibly towards creative expressions of Samoan culture, I intended to search for some similarities to NZ Samoans' creativity. But along the way of developing this idea, I recognized that many HI Samoans, as well as others might not understand why I say that we appear somewhat marginalized in this identity expression. Some HI Samoans may, in fact, be completely oblivious to the fact that these matters even exist, or are of any concern. It is my objective, then, to raise a consciousness amongst HI Samoans of the NZ Samoans' movement, our past and contemporary reality and decipher some forms of cultural identity expressions among our generation in the Hawai'i diaspora. It is of utmost importance that HI Samoans are informed of a

transition towards freely expressing our cultural selves, our Samoan-ness. Equally important is the need for an explanation or a definition of what I mean by Samoan cultural or ethnic identity. This will have to be included later as a way to introduce some of the NZ Samoan literature. Perhaps a knowledge of these ideas will help, also, to generate some forward thinking towards larger creative forms of, or academic discourses on Samoan ethnic and cultural identity expressions in Hawai'i.

To reiterate, language, religion, *matai* and *fa'asamoa* systems and their respective roles in the Samoan diaspora will not be the focus of this project. Many learned and experienced Pacific Islands and western scholars have produced studies that elaborately discuss the role of language and Christianity in the Samoan culture, especially serving as cultural foundations in the diaspora. These subjects will be discussed briefly in the basic history of Samoan migration to Hawai'i, and where ever appropriate, but no more than sufficient to illustrate a point. It is, nonetheless, very important to acknowledge that Samoans in Hawai'i find churches to be the *va*, the spaces of solace in which they can re-connect to and perpetuate their Samoan-ness. Likewise, there are many churches/religions in Hawai'i that conduct services in the Samoan language and encourage and support the preservation and practice of the Samoan culture, via the *fa'asamoa*, by having membership activities geared towards those endeavors.

II. The Situation & Literature Survey

Colonialism and its ensuing socio-cultural disruption has left Samoans

and other Pacific Islanders in a situation of change and dependency from which we may never completely recover. Most Pacific people today face such huge complex issues dealing with, for example, major loss of land, language and culture, among other things, while becoming more and more dependent on weak cash economies that are ill-suited to “traditional” island-based lifestyle. Pacific Islanders were unwittingly hurled into a massive global phenomenon westerners considered “progress and development,” in which the majority of our people did not fare well. While this course may indeed have been unavoidable, and seen by some as “beneficial,” many indigenous Pacific people were unable to keep up with the changing economic times. Like many Pacific Islanders, Samoans struggled to merely obtain some access to newly-introduced necessities normally available to most people in the western ideological context.

Education and employment opportunities were the most sought after of the new necessities, and, consequently, became and remain the highest motivating and determining factors Samoans use to measure their personal and collective “progress and development.” Unfortunately, the proverbial light at the end, the expectation of success at the end of this strange tunnel, an imposed western construction, was unrealistic and practically impossible for the majority. This impossibility forced upon the Samoans a harsh realization of their inability to attain these prescribed ideas of prosperity and its benchmarks in their own home country. The result of this realization was a massive outmigration of Samoans both from American Samoa and independent Samoa to the flourishing economies of New Zealand, Australia, Hawai'i and the mainland USA.

Initially, the older generation of migrant Samoans sought to earn decent

or competitive wages, from which a substantial amount was sent back home for funding island-based kinship endeavors, including aiding in other *aiga* (family) emigration. As more and more family members joined in the movement, permanent communities were established in the “host” countries. Unbeknownst to the first migrants, their aspirational journeys would be the beginning of more than a quest for life's opportunities; it would be the start of something much more complex, even hugely problematic for Samoans. While outmigration enabled Samoans to enter into an extensive economic market, labor force and educational systems, these same opportunities they sought entangled the majority in some extremely challenging issues. Among these challenges and difficulties that remain pervasive concerns today are those of cultural erosion, language loss, and a reification of cultural aspects, once reserved for Samoan spaces, that contribute to the negotiations and constructions of ethnic and cultural identity—one's fundamental Samoan-ness—in highly globalized and contemporary diasporic environments.

III. Coming to Hawai'i: Background

“Islanders have broken out of their confinement, are moving around and away from their homelands... because they had been unnaturally confined and severed from much of their traditional sources of wealth, and because it is in their blood to be mobile.” Epeli Hauofa (1993:11)

Samoan migration to Hawai'i is believed to have started in the early 1900's; however, studies show that major movement occurred in two waves, with an often overlooked third wave that is perhaps on-going. The first group of Samoans arrived in 1919 when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS/Mormons) completed the construction of the first ever Mormon temple in

the Pacific, in the town of Laie, Hawai'i, on the northern coast of Oahu island (Franco, 1987, Young, 1977, Stanton, 1972). Mormon Samoans settled mostly "in and around the temple location" in Laie, and a migrant community developed steadily until it numbered about 500 by 1950 (Franco, 1987:7). In 1955, the Mormon's Church College, now known as Brigham Young University's Hawai'i campus (BYU-Hawai'i), was opened to provide higher education for the increasing number of Polynesian members in Laie, expanding that opportunity at an advanced education to Mormons in Samoa and other Polynesian islands (Stanton, 1972:2). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints had already erected a "secondary school" in Pesega, Samoa, as well as having a Mormon school in American Samoa. These island-based institutions became the "feeder" lines for the Church College, increasing the Samoan community in Laie, as many Samoans opted to remain in Hawai'i after completing their studies (Stanton, 1972:2).

Further strengthening of Hawai'i's first Samoan community came in 1963 when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) was opened. The idea behind the establishment of the PCC was to "preserve elements of the cultures of the Polynesian members," as well as providing an income source via employment at the center for the students attending school at the Church College (Stanton, 1972:2). The center grew to be, and still continues to exist as a key source of employment for Samoan students and Laie's Samoan community (Franco, 1987:7, Stanton, 1972:2). The Mormons included within the center's Polynesian (Fiji included) cultural preservation efforts a Samoan village, along with five others: Tonga, Tahiti,

Hawai'i, New Zealand and Fiji (Stanton, 1972:2). Since its inception, the Polynesian Cultural Center continues to employ artisans, cultural specialists or consultants, musicians and dancers/entertainers, some of whom sometimes come straight from Samoa specifically intending to obtain those positions and employment opportunities (Stanton, 1972:2-3).

The second and larger migration of Samoans occurred in 1951 when after World War II, the United States military closed their Pago Pago, American Samoa naval station and relocated its operations, along with a band of Samoan *fitafita* (soldiers) to Hawai'i (Eyde, 1954:3; Young, 1977:21; Franco, 1987:7; Fa'aleava, 2003:9). The initial military relocation in 1951 brought over 100 Samoan naval personnel to Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i and over 200 of their dependents (Young, 1977:21). The following year brought an even bigger group of American Samoans:

“In July of 1952, the *U.S.S. Jackson* was made available for transporting remaining dependents of Samoan naval personnel to Honolulu. Because the ship was capable of carrying nearly 1,000 passengers and the dependents totaled only a few hundred, space was available for others. Those who desired to enlist in the Armed Forces or who had a sponsor in Hawai'i got passage for \$30” (Young, 1977:21).

Facing the loss of wages and unemployment when the Pago Pago US military base closed, over 950 Samoans boarded the USS Jackson to continue or assume military service positions or access a wider economic market (Eyde, 1954:3). This new group of migrant Samoans, primarily from American Samoa, moved into the military housing in the Pearl Harbor/Honolulu area, “dispersing later into other communities within Honolulu” (Eyde, 1954:4; Franco, 1987:7).

A third wave of Samoan migration to Hawai'i happened when in the early-

mid 1960's, a critical economic change occurred which "generated employment opportunities" for Samoans both in American and Western Samoa (Franco, 1985:167):

"In 1962, a huge increase in US federal appropriations to the territory—from 2.1 million dollars in 1961 to 9.5 million dollars in 1962—signaled the beginning of a 'major economic revolution'...in the construction of a jet runway, a large auditorium, a power plant, and a new highway" (Franco, 1985:167).

As airports were developed, travel between the Samoas and Hawai'i became a realistic opportunity. The formation of other infrastructure brought Western Samoans into American Samoa in search of employment, and the addition and expansion of airports and airline service further created access to the US and Hawai'i economies. Compared to the first wave of migrants who were educated by and acquired skills under the Mormon institutions, and the 1950s influx of skilled and semi-skilled military laborers, the third wave of Samoans were primarily those "unskilled and uneducated," seeking the attainments of their predecessors and finding the development of major facilities in American Samoa advantageous (Franco, 1985:167; Mayer, 2008).

A 1980 study on the Samoan population of Oahu island alone, conducted by the Hawaii State Department of Planning and Economic Development (DBEDT, 1980), showed that the Samoan population in Hawai'i was concentrated in migrant enclaves located in areas such as: Hau'ula, Salt Lake-Pearl City, Waipahu, Makaha-Waianae (Leeward/West Oahu coast) and Palolo, as well as the strong, early community of Laie (Franco, 1987:6). Beginning in 1980, the US Census Bureau, for the first time, identified Samoans as a distinct ethnic group categorically (Franco, 1987:5, Lilomaiva-Niko, 1993:10) .

Previously, census data lumped all Pacific people under the Asian Pacific Islander (API) grouping, re-assigning the category of Pacific Islanders (PI) only after the Asians received Census distinction (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009). As evident in the 2000 US Census figures, the majority of Hawaii's many ethnicities are identified as distinct ethnic populations, making it easier to get an idea or rough estimate of the HI Samoans' population figure. According to the census data and information from Dr Bob Franco, there are between 16,000 to 20,000 Samoans are living in Hawai'i and mostly on Oahu island (Franco, 2008; DBEDT, 2000).

An important point worth noting is the fact that American Samoans, as citizens of the US territory, have the "freedom of movement into the mainland USA unencumbered by immigration restrictions." (Franco, 1987:3) The military bases on the mainland USA serve as "host" communities to Samoans in the military, their dependents, and oftentimes, for other island-based relatives wishing to visit. In a recent email communication, Dr Franco explained that HI Samoans' cultural identities are "also shaped by the movement of Samoans to and through Hawai'i in *aiga-malaga* (Samoan customary family visitations/trips that indicate an inherent cultural inclination towards migration) movements" (Franco, 2008). Thus, Franco's point about the continuous *malaga* movements "to and through" Hawai'i to the continent and back to American Samoa can sometimes present difficulties when attempting to gather official demographic statistics. That being said, the 2000 US Census reported more than 100,000 Samoans living in the United States with the majority of Samoan concentration in Hawai'i, Utah, Alaska, Washington State, California, Oklahoma and Seattle,

the highest Samoan/part-Samoan population recorded in California (US Census, 2000).

IV. Hawai'i Literature

My literary investigation to ascertain Samoan forms of cultural identity expression in Hawai'i led me instead to studies documenting the social progression and acculturation of Samoans. Contained within the majority of a very limited amount of Hawai'i-based literature, starting from the mid 1950's, are perceptions of Samoans that are largely centered around issues of acculturation. Early Hawai'i studies are either wholly or peripherally concerned with the Samoans' social adjustment processes in efforts to understand and aid the Samoans in adapting to the host society (Eyde, 1954; Forster, 1954; Pierce, 1956; Yost, 1965; Bloombaum, 1973; Young, 1974; Young, 1977; Franco, 1985; Franco, 1987; Maeda, 1998; Saito, 1999).

Initially, literature on Samoans in Hawai'i were aimed at making sense of this new ethnic group that brought with them their distinct cultural beliefs and practices. Along with their arrival came a trumpeting panic that sent waves of apprehension, alarm and discontentment from Hawai'i residents, as is evident in the development of stereotypical "myths" about Samoans (see below in Young, 1974). One of the first attempts by a researcher to document the Samoans in Hawai'i was in 1954 when a University of Hawai'i graduate student named John Forster chose to look at the "new arrivals" who were apparently "...suffering from various types of disease...which might prove to be a threat to the local community and a...drain on the resources of local medical and welfare

services.” (Forster, 1954:1). Furthermore, Forster observed that assimilation would occur quicker if the Samoans were not isolating themselves in their own spaces—adding to that he states:

“To the extent that the Samoan families in naval housing have been scattered randomly throughout the area, and as their non-Samoan neighbors have adopted a negative attitude toward them, each Samoan nuclear unit has withdrawn within its own membership for the basic satisfaction of life.” (Forster, 1954:87)

Forster “advises” that Samoans should have more contact with non-Samoans, so as to ensure successful assimilation; however, their neighbors had already “adopted” negative perceptions and attitudes towards the Samoan servicemen and their families, pushing the migrants into further isolation—an unfavorable circumstance in the adjustment process (Forster, 1954).

Also in 1954, a fellow named David Eyde's research focused on giving a history of Samoa, its people, culture, values and beliefs. More importantly, he sought to identify, define and inform non-Samoans of the reasons behind Samoan migration to Hawai'i. Eyde explained the difficult situation that Samoans faced when the US military base closed down, focusing on the devastating effects on the island's economy. Eyde also collected impeccable data on the Samoans in Hawai'i—with a particular focus on those that came on the USS Jackson—documenting their whereabouts, current employment, family, assimilation status, and so forth (Eyde, 1954).

In Pierce's 1956 research of the Samoan settlement in Laie, he found what he considered to be positive signs of integration, due to the supportive nature of the Mormon religion. Because the Samoans in Laie were also

members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the dominant residents of that township, assimilation for the Samoans was viewed by Pierce as promising. Moreover, Pierce states that "tension and conflict" among the Laie residents, non-Samoan Mormons and Samoan Mormons, are "minimized" because the "acculturating group" and the "donor group hold similar attitudes" about things that both groups "consider to be important." (Pierce, 1956:93-94). Essentially, as Yost succinctly summarizes, Pierce's study concluded that:

"the conditions in Laie were favorable for the gradual adjustment of the Mormon Samoan to the American way of life since Mormon economic principles lay somewhere between the Samoan cooperative, agrarian system and the American competitive, industrial system." (Yost on Pierce's study, 1965:5)

Yost also discusses in her 1965 Sociology Master's thesis Forster's work on the military Samoan assimilation as having showed promise because "the Samoan migrants had made an initial adjustment to their new environment on the overt level by adopting the outward behavior patterns of the larger community, although on the covert level they still preferred the Samoan patterns." (Yost, 1965:5). In large contrast to what Yost reports as Forster's findings on the assimilation of military Samoans of Pearl Harbor Naval Housing, is her own research on the Samoan community of Oahu's Leeward coast (Nanakuli to Makaha) which revealed that the Samoans of the west coast:

"...were not at the point on the continuum labeled as 'acculturated' because they had not wholly adopted the outward, or readily observable, patterns of the host society. For example, they were frequently seen in their neighborhood and sometimes on the main streets wearing lava-lavas. In such places they were easily observed by non-Samoans...they had not moved towards assimilation. They were slower in replacing Samoan culture with Hawaiian-American culture." (Yost, 1965:126)

Yost also noted that when compared with the military Samoans of Forster's study, the Nanakuli-Makaha Samoans, in terms of "readily observable aspects of the culture of the larger community," dressed in western clothing often, ate non-Samoan starches such as rice and potatoes instead of taro, and aspired for their children to be "proficient" English speakers, "though in the privacy of their homes they frequently wore lava-lavas and spoke Samoan." (Yost, 1965:125)

By the 1970s, Hawai'i's non-Samoan populace appeared to take a more proactive approach to the Samoan acculturation and assimilation processes. The focus of several studies from the late 1960s into the 1970s indicated a shift from identifying, defining and explaining Samoans, their migration and transitional patterns to obtaining and disseminating information which was geared towards developing systemic programs to aid in adjustment and to basically inform the rest of Hawai'i's residents. For instance, in 1973 Bloombaum's research illuminated the performance of the Samoan child in a school setting. Bloombaum writes:

"...the greatest proportion of successful (rather than unsuccessful) children came from families in which the general level of acculturation was high, there was mixed ethnicity, the parents spoke English well, the parents were highly educated and participated in ethnically mixed groups, the father had a skilled occupation, and parents were oriented toward upward mobility..." (Bloombaum, 1973:181)

Bloombaum's dissertation expressed, for the non-Samoan, the success of those Samoans (and their children) who when acculturated exhibited positive and desirable results. The general implication conveyed through this research is that there existed a great need to develop ways in which to encourage positive assimilation and "upward mobility" in Samoan parents, leading to the successful

production of their children in schools.

Bloombaum, however, was not the first to suggest this change in focus. Among some of the first projects to indicate the need for a shift in perceptions of the HI Samoans include the *Samoan Pilot Project, Palama Samoan Neighborhood Survey and Organization: A Preliminary Report* by Fay and Vaiao Alailima (1965), and the *Samoan Heritage Series Proceedings*—a conference first held at the University of Hawai'i in 1972, sponsored by the UH College of Continuing Education and Community Service, the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, and the State Council on Samoan Heritage, Honolulu (Samoan Heritage Series Proceedings, 1972). These efforts brought together Samoan leaders, state educators, social service workers and other state sectors to discuss and create avenues to encourage the development of social, educational and human services programs. These systemic creations worked to provide the HI Samoans with some training (educational, parental or vocational), thus increasing the successful scholastic performance of HI Samoan children, as Bloombaum had indicated, in addition to pushing their parents closer to a desired level of adjustment and positive results.

Perhaps the most distinguished and critical of systemic programs resulting from the collaborative efforts of Samoan, community and state leaders was the founding of the *Bilingual Education Projects of Hawai'i* in 1974. Funded by the federally appropriated Title VII grants and mandated by the US Bilingual Education Act of 1968, the state of Hawai'i implemented various programs that sought to aid Samoan, Filipino and Korean immigrant children to adapt to school curriculum while maintaining their cultural uniqueness:

“In Hawai’i, numerous bilingual education projects funded by Title VII have been completed...beginning in 1974. The implementation of these models in Hawai’i has resulted in such outcomes as: (1) improvement in students’ English language skills, (2) improvement in students’ academic achievement, (3) enhanced self-concept, (4) enhanced pride in one’s cultural heritage and appreciation of other cultures, (5) increased competencies of bilingual and mainstream teachers and school, district, and state staff, and (6) increased involvement of limited English proficient parents and community representatives in the schools” (Pablo, Ongteco, Koki; PREL) .

Among the materials and resources produced and distributed to educators and students, for instance, were cultural readers with stories in both English and Samoan; teacher’s manuals & student booklets; picture/word flashcards in English and Samoan; and bilingual songbooks (Pablo, Ongteco, Koki; PREL). Instrumental in the production of local bilingual materials and teachers’ instructional resources were Samoan educators Salu Hunkin Reid and Margaret Tuiolematagi Iofi (1976, 1978, 1980, 1986, 1987).

Supporting the shifting tone in research and projects is a 1974 collection of selected readings entitled, Searching for the Promised Land: Filipinos and Samoans in Hawai’i, in which editor Nancy Foon Young compiled articles for the University of Hawai’i’s College of Education and General Assistance Center for the Pacific. In this collection, which included some articles/writings by prominent Samoans such as Fay and Vaiao Alailima and the late Peter Tali Coleman, former Governor of American Samoa, Young expresses the need for an awareness of ethnic minorities in Hawai’i. Created as part of an educational curriculum resource package, Young emphasizes a necessary understanding by others of the Filipino and Samoan ethnic groups, urging educators to encourage their students to “look beyond the many existing negative stereotypes of the

Filipinos and Samoans in Hawai'i, to understand the motivations, conflicts, lifestyles of each group and to seek answers for making a better Hawai'i for recent immigrants and...residents alike." (Young, 1974:vi) Most of the selected readings in Young's compilation are newspaper articles from the Honolulu Star Bulletin and Honolulu Advertiser, currently two of Hawai'i's largest circulating newspapers, during the early-mid 1950s, 1960's and 1970s. One of the rather disturbing of the readings was written by Tomi Knaefler called, "Myths About Samoans" originally from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, in May of 1965. Knaefler explains that while conducting research, he was confronted "time and again" with "ill-conceived ideas regarding the Samoan." Knaefler then goes on to list examples while also dispelling these "ill-conceived myths" with facts he obtained specifically for that purpose. Some of the "myths about Samoans" he addresses are:

1. The Trouble Myth: "Samoans are always in trouble."
 - Knaefler: "Proportionately, they are no more in trouble than most any other ethnic group...records show little Samoan involvement in major Hawaiian crimes...often, difficulties arise from cultural or communication misunderstandings."
2. The Distrust Myth: "You can't trust those Samoans."
 - Knaefler: "No more, no less than one can trust any group of humans. That myth may have sprung out of a cultural misunderstanding...they are a very giving people."
3. The Welfare Myth: "Samoans are a drain on our welfare funds."
 - Knaefler: "Figures from the department of Social Services show

only 30 Samoan families are now under welfare in Hawai'i. This is proportionately a very low percentage, compared to the total welfare caseload."

4. The Stupidity Myth: "You can't teach the Samoan anything."

- Knaefler: "To gain a better education for themselves and their children has been and still is a prime motivation for Samoan migrations to Hawai'i and the Mainland. It should be realized...that Samoan youngsters...face...language difficulties, lack of an American up-bringing, and other culture-rooted problems."

5. The Never-Make-It Myth: "Samoans will never make it 'big' here."

- Knaefler: "Sociologists say the accomplishments of Samoans in Hawai'i so far are actually 'far ahead' of other migrating groups...among them...Johnny Kneubuhl,... the Apisa brothers,...the Harrington brothers,... John Bird,...and Albert Lolotai."

6. The Unclean Myth: "Samoans are dirty and are all disease carriers."

- Knaefler: "No truer than the myth that all reporters are heavy drinkers or that all church-going people are Christians" (Knaefler in Young, 1974: 17-19)

Knaefler concludes his article, addressing the "dirty myth" by saying that "among the most spotlessly clean houses this reporter has ever gone into were Samoan ones" (Young, 1974:17-19). Also included in Young's collection is the keynote address delivered by Peter Tali Coleman, the then-Governor of American Samoa, in Honolulu at the 1973 *Samoan Heritage Series Proceedings*:

"What is a Samoan?...he is a product of a communal system with built-in securities... Under that system, the family is the most important unit, and the individual must design his own wants and needs in light of the importance of the family. The basic problem in Hawai'i today...is that being a product of the communal system, he has now found himself in a highly competitive economic system...foreign to him...which brings to him at times a hostile environment...this is his key problem today." (Peter Tali Coleman, 1973; Young, 1974: 88)

Three years later, Young extracted only those articles from her previous work concerning Hawai'i's Samoan population and presented it in a book titled, *Samoans In Hawai'i: Selected Readings*, funded again by the University of Hawai'i's General Assistance Center for the Pacific in 1977. This endeavor by Young included more information on Samoans by Samoans (*Lusiana Fau'olo, Margaret Tuiolematagi Iofi, Peter Tali Coleman, Lagituaiva Tu'ulima Maga, Vaiao Alailima, Fay Alailima, and informants Mr and Mrs T.L.F. Fau'olo and Tumua Salanoa*) and wrapped it up by inserting "recommendations" from the Samoan Heritage Series conference. These "recommendations" called for such actions as employing "qualified and influential Samoans in all public and private agencies to assist in their work with Samoans." (Young, 1977:59) Of worthwhile note, Samoans were "traditionally grouped with Koreans, Micronesians and other minor groups" in Census reports; however, Young estimated that they numbered between 7,000 to 15,000 during the mid-late 1970s (Young, 1977:5).

With the changing direction of local studies during the 1970s—1980s, Hawai'i's scholars seemed set on understanding the Samoans living among them. Samoan cultural history, values, social strata, beliefs and practices were considered foremost issues in deciphering a persisting Samoan-ness that seemed impervious to acculturation. Anthropology students Dennis Keene

(1978) and Frederic K. Sutter (1980) both wrote their PhD dissertations on issues surrounding Samoan social life and customs, including the discipline involved in traditional child-rearing practices. In Keene & Sutter's examinations, sociocultural transformations experienced when moving from an opened, shared and communal village setting to the private and often intrusive nature of western societies are viewed as a major factor in transitional difficulties among Samoan youth (Keene, 1978; Sutter, 1980).

University of Hawai'i Professor Bob Franco focuses on perceptions of work, movement and patterns of migration, and explains that theories of migration as "a distinctive Samoan movement pattern" that includes travels within and outside of Samoa; and that conventional theories such as the "push-pull" model are not "particularly helpful" in comprehending Samoan migration; rather, the Samoan concept of *malaga* (travels between villages, districts, islands, etc.) should be used to examine Samoan movement from the islands, to Hawai'i, to the mainland USA and back (Franco, 1985:344-361). Stated in the very beginning of his 1985 Anthropology PhD dissertation, Franco sought to identify "unique cultural competencies rather than deficiencies in Samoan workers (Franco, 1985:vi). Moreover, Franco discusses the division of the Samoa Islands into two separate countries (although the culture and language are one and the same)--with the western islands going to the Germans, then to the British and New Zealand administration while the eastern islands went into US possession (Franco, 1987:3). To support the pattern of Samoan movement, Franco explains that the Samoan "*malaga*, the traditional practice of inter-village and inter-island visiting and resource-sharing" has always been in existence,

except now that Samoans have outmigrated, “it is over larger space”—internationally to New Zealand, the US and Australia (Franco, 1987).

Franco's 1987 demographic profile for the University of Hawai'i-affiliated East-West Center Population Institute in Honolulu also included the most updated statistics on Samoan socioeconomic status during that time. The data for Oahu island, the Hawaiian island with the highest concentration of Samoans, most residing in Kalihi's three major government-subsidized public housing projects for low-income families is as follows:

- Kuhio Park Terrace (KPT Housing)—Samoans comprised 53% of total housing population
- Kalihi Valley Homes (Kamehameha IV Housing)--Samoans were 43% of total housing population
- Mayor Wright Housing (MWH Housing)--Samoans were 30% of the housing's population
- Other major areas of Samoan concentration: Laie-Hau'ula, Salt Lake-Pearl City, Waipahu, Makaha-Waianae (& Nanakuli) and Palolo, with “large samoan communities centered around public housing areas in Kalihi and Palolo, military housing areas near Pearl Harbor and Pearl City, and the Mormon religious center at Laie” (Franco, 1987:7).

In addition to geographic data, Franco expanded on the fact that Samoans in Hawai'i had the lowest incomes (1987:17-18); they had the highest unemployment rate (1987:12); and Samoans were the highest percentage of any ethnic group on welfare (1 in 3 Samoan families were dependent on government welfare aid), “as compared with other Hawai'i families (a 1 in 10 ratio for other Hawai'i families)” (1987:18).

Another Samoan-associated issue entered into the subject of studies in 1986. A social work project by University of Hawai'i graduate students Mauga, Segueira and Taylor revealed:

"a factor unique to Hawai'i is that Hawaiians and Samoans have incredibly high arrest rates as well as recidivism rates in comparison to other ethnic groups in the United States. A study in 1984 study showed that Samoans made up a little over 1.5% of Hawai'i's population, but had a 4.2% of all arrests" (Mauga, Segueira, Taylor, 1986:3-4). Mauga et al. examined recidivism tendencies of Samoans, a study or term referring to those who were formerly incarcerated and released back into society as free men, but end up back in prison. The university graduate students found that "Hawaiians and Samoans make up the majority of the prison population and the recidivists in Hawai'i's prisons." (1986:5). Further bringing attention to the "violent" and "criminal" inclinations of a new generation of Samoans in Hawai'i is Mayeda's work on ethnic and racial formations of at-risk Samoan youth in Hawai'i. Mayeda cites the works of Chesney-Lind (1998), Kassebaum (1995), Okamura (1990), and others who have found that Samoan youth had "disproportionate numbers" of robbery arrests and gang membership, while having the "lowest percentage in education attainment for this age group" (Mayeda, 1998:1-3). Mayeda's research did, however, include some information on the topic of ethnic identity, although the reality of its negativity is a little disheartening to realize:

"The research reveals that Samoan adolescents' future goals and expectations of reaching those goals are heavily influenced by their ethnic identity and by an awareness of class constraints. With respect to ethnic identity, participants' responses indicated that non-Samoan peers commonly viewed Samoan adolescents as less enthusiastic, and at times less capable scholars...Thus, the ethnic identity of Samoans, as seen by both Samoan and non-Samoan youth is one which is frequently associated with non-academic interests...This tagged and self-fulfilled ethnic identity in turn affects Samoan youth's expectations of what opportunities are actually available to them" (Mayeda, 1998: 70).

Mayeda states that under "strained" circumstances, if Samoan boys are unable

to excel in school or sports, “the option of crime becomes particularly attractive” (Mayeda, 1998: 70).

Liane Saito's 1999 research on Samoan youth supports Franco's suggestions of migration, *malaga* and movements to and through Hawai'i as characteristic of the Samoans in the last decade. Saito points out, too, that “stats from past three decades of studies...show that Samoans are overrepresented in areas of incarceration and arrests, health problems, low-income socioeconomic status and unemployment” (Saito, 1999:2-4). She expresses that this information is a “somewhat bleak picture of Samoans in Hawai'i.” Furthermore, Saito sees the clash between Samoan cultural expectations and western orientation outside the home as a huge determining factor and considers the effects on Samoan youth, as they are the future generation (Saito, 1999:5).

V. Reflections on Hawai'i Studies

Hawaii researchers have attempted to analyze and comprehend the Samoans socio-culturally in an ongoing effort to gain an informed understanding of the migrants and their acculturation, according to most of these studies. Although some of the information can be dispiriting, it is, nevertheless, necessary to examine and extract from it the effects of these notions on the contemporary generation and our non participation in ethnic and cultural identity expressions such as those of the NZ Samoans. In early researches, HI Samoans were naturally misunderstood and often viewed from the far-removed social services lens, or the negative perspectives of “others” in Hawai'i. The most salient of those perspectives are the “judgements” extricated from the

projects of the 1950s (Forster), the late 1960s (Yost), and early 1970s (Knaefler). Negative attitudes of Hawai'i's local residents towards the Samoan immigrants were due largely to the misinformation included in the study, and the writer's informant's reaction to the huge influx in 1952. Following the alarming news of the foreigners' arrival, researchers documented the acculturation process of the Samoans in terms of readily observable factors. In Yost's research of the west coast's Nanakuli-Makaha Samoans, she identified physical appearance in dress and the use of the Samoan language as overt factors contributing to a disinclination towards acculturation. Moreover, Yost's statement about the "readily observed" aspects of acculturation were exemplified in terms of western clothing, non-Samoan food and English proficiency. The inclusion of the fact that the Samoans were "slow in replacing Samoan culture with Hawaiian-American culture" typifies existing hegemonic prejudices that are even more protrusive in Young's Knaefler article on "Samoan Myths". It paints a clearer picture for me of the rejection and exclusion I experienced from non-Samoan children, especially since I could not speak English at all when I first entered school. The description of the use of an *'ie lavalava* as an identifier of Samoans in public spaces validates the admonitions expressed to my mother by my relatives who had come here before us. Also, Knaefler's "myths" explains the existence and persistence of current stereotypical perceptions and assumptions about Samoans that can be heard in non-Samoan discussions, for instance, after befriending or speaking with a Samoan for the first time. It is not unusual for me to hear comments like, "Oh? You are Samoan? Well, you don't look like one." Sometimes, too, after

establishing that I am a Samoan, non-Samoans have commented that I must be mixed with some other Euro-American ethnicity, or that I might be part-Hawaiian. Documentations by those such as Yost and Forster served as the initial literature that educated others about the Samoan migrants.

Unfortunately, the misinformation contained within the first reports on the migrants remained pervasive in the attitudes of some although it has been nearly 60 years since the second migration was recorded. The more recent reports on Samoan youth presented by Maeda and Saito indicate concerns of the Samoan youth's perceived cultural identity interpretations and interchangeability of a modern identity between the home and school. It is evidence that an internalization of the prevailing prejudices have been in effect among the HI Samoan youth since their parents' generation (my generation and long before) began encountering it through our own adolescent bi-cultural adjustment struggles.

What is compelling about the studies themselves is the gradual progression in which a notable shift in "tones," perhaps even slightly in perceptions and attitudes, begin to occur. By the 1970s, Hawai'i educators and larger community started to take the lead in a movement towards proactive measures with regard to the smooth, culturally-sensitive assimilation of the HI Samoans. Based on the development of programs aligned with the Bilingual Education Act, and as evidenced in Young's collections (1973 & 1974), a point of pivotal convergence between Hawai'i educators, civic leaders and HI Samoans had been approached. The 1970s involvement of those influential figures like Governor Coleman and other early Samoan writers, the

implementation of bicultural education under the state's Department of Education, and the teaching materials produced by Samoan educators like Reid and Iofi were definitely positive progression towards a culturally-sensitive adjustment process. The results of the state implementing the Bilingual Education program shows a significant switch towards positive and supportive perceptions, especially in aiding the HI Samoan in the acculturation process. Significant to the 1970's, also, was the involvement of HI Samoans themselves working with non-Samoans, social service agencies, the University of Hawai'i and other state leaders and affiliates to help with the migrants adjustment. It may have been the first time as well that the "myths" which prompted the severe stereotypes were brought to surface, especially through newspaper articles written by those like Knaefer. Knaefer's efforts to dismiss the unfounded "myths" showed a favorable turn and proactive effort by non-Samoans to fairly inform others of the HI Samoan migrants as a group of human beings and not a sub-group as they were viewed by earlier studies, and perhaps by some non-Samoans. As a point of extrapolatory observation, the local studies of this period, although focused on acculturation and assimilation, worked peripherally and steadily to bring to light many of the transitional issues that the HI Samoans were experiencing. In earnest attempts, projects done by Reid, Iofi, Young and Franco showed an inclusive process, especially an evolutionary point in which Samoans worked to help other Samoans. This inclusive method drew the HI Samoans into a phase of familiarization—it familiarized the HI Samoans with their own situation and familiarized Hawaii's non-Samoans with the migrants' situation. This phase helped to encourage and

empower some HI Samoans towards their own proactive participation. The creation of the Bilingual Educational Programs not only illuminated the Samoans' predicament to their own people, it helped, first and foremost, in the youth's classroom learning. The recommendations from the Samoan Heritage Series conference, which included a need to involve Samoans in the development of an assimilated Samoan community, was beneficial and served in fulfilling the migrants initial aspirations of accessing opportunities. In fact, the Samoan Service Providers Association (SSPA), a "one-stop" social service agency formed in the early 1980s by Samoan leaders (Salu Reid and Kirali Alailima) who participated in the conference put in place various educational and employment supplemental programs such as job training, tuition assistance for vocational schools, information and referrals and GED certification (Mayer, 2008).

Despite the positive shift of the 1970s, some of the projects in 1980s and 1990s present a different dreary and discouraging view of the HI Samoans. Franco's studies served to provide an understanding of the HI Samoans' socioeconomic position and population island-wide. The 1987 statistics by Franco further identified the areas densely populated by HI Samoans, which today, still remain miniature Samoan "villages" and the areas in which most of my own observations as far as researching for cultural identity expressions are focused (the government's public housing projects). Mauga, et al., reveal an even darker "reality" of the modern Samoan male as they present some criminal characteristics in their study of recidivism while Maeda and Saito examine the incongruity of the *fa'asamoa* and western values and the effects of that

incompatibility on Samoan youth. These later projects reporting on Samoans in prison and the “at-risk” Samoan youth indicates that social adjustment struggles are still affecting the acculturation of HI Samoans, only now it had evolved negatively among the new generation. The implications of their studies identifies and emphasizes some negative and criminal tendencies among the Samoans juggling two cultures, as well as highlighting the Samoan culture and its dissimilarities with the dominant western culture as a substantial obstruction in “high-risk” Samoan youth’s adjustment.

Mauga, et al, Maeda and Saito examine issues that are very real and poignant, although disappointing to the Samoan progression that seemed to be headed towards positive results. From the perspective of someone like myself struggling to look for promising indications leaning toward transcending the given stereotypes, it is a disruption in a shift or progression for the positive. However, the history of the HI Samoans' acculturation process is not entirely bleak, as I suspected, as there is a very real and discernible achievement in terms of the state's bilingual or bicultural education programs of the 1970s. On a personal level, the federally mandated programs were in place when we arrived in Hawai'i. In a matter of two years, I was removed from the isolation of the special education ESL classes and placed in regular classrooms. For the purpose of this study, these recent discussions and notions represent part of the cause and reason behind the HI Samoans' non participation in cultural identity expression that are comparable to those of the NZ Samoans.

Admittedly, we are not so much in a stagnant acculturative situation as I assumed according to some of the literature; instead, contemporary HI

Samoans are continuing to look for and find footing in terms of western and cultural expectations, reacting or not reacting to the circumstances within the host environment. This is true of those young Samoans who exhibit rebellious attitudes as Maeda and Saito discussed. Many HI Samoans, as illustrated by Franco, reside in low-income, disadvantaged communities in which exists ambiguity, frustration and rigidity of economic constraints. It is not a factor unique to the HI Samoans; however, as the HI Samoan population grows and becomes more "visible," studies such as Maeda and Saito's are sometimes needed to identify possible solutions.

A key point learned from the state's bicultural education efforts is that the focus was not to replace Samoan customs or culture with an American-Hawaiian culture, rather, the federally funded program sought to educate the migrants while encouraging their unique cultural retention, in addition to developing an appreciation for the multicultural communities in which the migrants lived. This is perhaps an important fundamental reason in understanding the non participation of HI Samoans in larger, progressive identity expressions such as those from New Zealand's Samoans. It could be interpreted to mean that perhaps as we were engaged in adjustment processes, our host community has helped us to maintain and appreciate our ethnic and cultural identities, through recognizing our multicultural society within Hawai'i's communities. It may be that negative perceptions, although salient early on, was minimized by the implementation of culturally sensitive social and educational programs that supported cultural uniqueness in the 1970s.

A fact that must not remain unmentioned is that there have been others

who have produced Samoan-focused studies, bringing light to certain aspects that contribute to a diasporic Samoa identity (for example, Jacinta Galea'i, Fa'afetai Lesa's PhD dissertation, Sa'ili Stefane's PhD dissertation, Rochelle Fonoti's MA thesis and Laura Fepulea'i's MA thesis); however, the more recent studies (Galea'i excluded) were not available at the time this paper was written. Also, with the exception of Fonoti's documentation of the *tatau* in diasporic communities, the other projects were not entirely focused on identifying forms of HI Samoans' identity expressions, but included other issues surrounding the HI Samoan situation.

Conversely, NZ Samoans have overtly displayed a transcendence of their own respective adjustment issues in terms of progressively expressing freely their evolved ethnic/cultural identities. As we will see in the next section, discourses on Samoan cultural and ethnic identity are a dominant subject in much of New Zealand's academic productions, as many are studying this phenomenon. For us here in Hawai'i, it is definitely worth examining, if only to gain an understanding of our own current situation. What are some of the basic differences between Hawai'i and New Zealand that can better explain the rise of NZ Samoans and the apparent non participation of HI Samoans as far as cultural identity expression is concerned? Are there any other factors contributing to the HI Samoans' situation? A short section examining a few of the popular/dominant literature about NZ Samoans follows.

VI. Reflections on NZ Samoans, Some NZ Literature & "Cultural Identity"

The majority of New Zealand's Samoan population migrated from the western islands known now as (independent) Samoa during the early 1900s

(Macpherson, Pitt, 1974). In the 1950s, similar to the HI Samoan migration, larger numbers of Samoans began the steady journey to New Zealand when a “boom” in the country's economy extended labor recruitment to its island territories of which Samoa was included. With a wealth of opportunities for employment in New Zealand's industry and service sectors, Samoans poured into the country and sought to access jobs in addition to better education for their children. Despite immigration restrictions of the mid-late 1960s, the country's economic decline of the early 1970s, and harsh immigration laws with government “raids” targeted towards alleged Samoan “overstayers” immediately following the country's recession, Samoans continued their travels into New Zealand. Recent population reports as of 2006 estimated that over 130,000 Samoans and part-Samoans were residing in New Zealand, with more than half of that number making up a generation of “New Zealand-born Samoans.” The steady migration of Samoans despite the enforcement of immigration laws proves a determination to access opportunities abundant outside of Samoa (Teara, 2007). Also, according to New Zealand's Census report on teara.govt.nz, there are about as many Samoans living in the country of New Zealand alone as there are in the entire United States of America.

Much of the present literature and dominant discourses on Samoan diaspora, particularly Samoans expressing an evolved, bi or multi cultural identity, has been coming from sources in New Zealand which, despite my earnest and hopeful investigation, do not seem to extend to us here in Hawaii for the most part. While there are studies focused on Samoan and Pacific Islander “identity” issues in the US and Australia (in addition to Samoans in New

Zealand), and a little information on Hawaii, the subject of cultural (or ethnic) *identity expressions* of HI Samoans is not the focus (Funaki, in Spickard, et al. 2002:211-218; Fitiseanu, et al., in Spickard, et al., 2002:269-278; Pau'u, in Spickard et al., 2002:31-39; Morton, in Spickard, et al. 2002:135-149; Janes, in Spickard, et al., 2002:118-132; Pau'u in Spickard, et al., 2002:31-40). Those studies work to elaborate and educate us on processes of migration and the effects on the diaspora as we continue to struggle between two worlds, or find neutral grounds in an evolved, wider Pan-Pacific identity. While relevant in understanding the status quo, the studies, for the most part, leave out Hawai'i and our own unique environment, specifically, in expressing a modern identity, with the exception of April Henderson's study that focuses on hip hop as a form of expression (Henderson, 1999).

The most innovative studies documenting the evolution of the contemporary Samoans' cultural (or ethnic identity as it is referred to) identity are from academics, authors and artists, Samoan or western, educated or based in New Zealand. Some of the most vital contributions that initially sparked my interest revolve around the progressive changes, dissecting and defining a modern, environment-induced and contextual modifications and compromises of cultural, or as studies refer to it, *ethnic identity* among Samoans and Pacific Islanders (Anae, 1998; Funaki, Funaki, in Spickard, et al. 2002:211; Anae, in Macpherson, et al. 2001:101-121; Anae, in Spickard, 2002:150-168; Pau'u, in Spickard et al., 2002:31-40; Spickard, in Spickard et al., 2002:40-56). Also, there are personally inspiring writings from other Pacific Islanders, especially those works by other Samoans expressing their own real-life

experiences, finding a contemporary space or *va* in which their evolved identity is expressed.

In perhaps the first attempt that sought to bring to light New Zealand's Samoan population, Macpherson and Pitt introduce Auckland as the "largest Polynesian city in the world." (1974:vii) Interestingly, what drove Macpherson and Pitt to produce this study is very similar to my own reason behind this paper, as the authors write: "In this study we have concentrated specifically on the Samoan migrants to New Zealand, for although studies have been made of Samoans in the United States...very little research has been done in New Zealand." (1974:9) On observations of Samoans and acculturation during the New Zealand administration of the country, the authors stated that "[a]cculturation was often more apparent than real. The Samoans did adopt and often adapt a considerable number of European values, institutions, and artefacts." (Macpherson, Pitt, 1974:4) Also, the study revealed that many preferred to move to the mainland USA, as it was a symbol of "power and affluence in the modern world." (1974:8) New Zealand was an undesirable place because of its colder climate and viewed as having a large *palagi* population, a "white man's world." (1974:8) Not surprisingly, Hawai'i was viewed favorably, as it was "...thought of as combining in some ways the best of both worlds, as a Polynesian, or at least non-European, milieu, however acculturated, with high standards of living and opportunity" (1974:8). Overall, the researchers examine social structures, such as the *aiga* (family) and church to determine how NZ Samoans were finding support through these institutions, brought from Samoa, to maintain a "group identity" and cope with adjustment in

New Zealand. The authors also acknowledge that “the whole Samoan migrant community is increasingly becoming a distinctive sub-culture within New Zealand society rather than a part of the wider Samoan world” (1974:113). They also note that despite the seeming adaptation, the “community remains distinctive; its members, consciously or unconsciously, seek a separate position in the host society” (1974:113). Significantly, Macpherson and Pitt are critical of New Zealand’s “European ignorance” and stress their recommendations for those government agencies to try a more culturally-sensitive and informed approach concerning the need to take action to close the social and communal gap between (Samoans) minorities and Europeans. Moreover, the researchers identify growing prejudices towards Samoans and encourage “official action...to maintain a just, humane and tolerant plural society in New Zealand, and to prevent prejudice and resentment from hardening into conflict” (1974:115-116).

According to this work, New Zealand's 1970s literature had started recognizing a need for more empowerment of its minorities in the same way that a tone shift was “heard” in Hawai’i’s literature of the same period. What is interesting to observe, though, is the contrast to Hawai’i’s Samoan literature, specifically in the early observations of Macpherson and Pitt on the development of a Samoan “sub-culture,” while striving to maintain a “separate position” in their host society. This is perhaps the point of divergence at which Hawai’i’s 1970s literature appear to encourage and emphasize the embracing of unique cultures through promoting bilingual education, while New Zealand’s Samoans start to be more exclusive, “sub-cultured,” and maintain a separation from the host community.

In the late 1990s, Dr Melani Anae pioneered a fresh perspective on NZ Samoans and the formations of a New Zealand-born Samoan identity, a most “viable identity” in the present for those Samoans that did not quite “fit” into the identities assigned to them by their parents and older generations, and did not “fit” into those identities assigned to them by society's “others.” (Anae, 1998)

She states in her research:

“The stories and narratives of a group of New Zealand-born Samoans concerning their life experiences provide valuable insights into their 'identity journeys'--the construction of ethnic identity through experimenting with subject positions over time, as a result of challenges to their perceived self-identities. For some, this journey ends with a secured identity--a self-satisfying ethnic identity as a New Zealand-born Samoan--others remain in a perpetual state of conscious or subconscious identity confusion” (Anae, 1998).

Anae's research was groundbreaking, influential and offered a renewed perspective from those born, raised or educated in New Zealand, introducing new identity terms such as “New Zealand-born Samoans” (1998) and the “browning of Auckland” (2004). From this point, it is necessary to examine that which I refer to as *cultural identity*.

I have heard it said that “we express our ideas of identity and heritage” according to our cultural values as a people and what we believe and practice. These distinct beliefs and practices—ethnic characteristics transmitted to us through our parents, ancestors and so forth—serve to link us to Samoa, our place of origin. For Samoans, the *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way) is at the core of our lives, whether or not we adhere to it. *Fa'asamoa* is an encapsulating concept with “guiding” principles which basically direct or “govern” our very Samoan-ness. It is what most of us know to be the central “philosophy,” or

creed that determines what we view, believe and practice in our Samoan culture, though there are different interpretations, of course. The definitions that are more familiar to me explaining cultural or ethnic identity have been ambiguous at best and a self-rejected western, individualistic concept at worst. The words “cultural,” “ethnic” and “identity” present myriad issues that can be something of a “loaded” task when attempting to define, refine and re-define in a way that can be understood by me first, and accepted by my Samoan peers locally. To narrow down the literature from New Zealand for the purpose of this paper, Dr Anae's work will be used to compare/contrast and determine further the ideas of culture, identity and cultural or ethnic identity as it relates to the HI Samoan case, in order to be clear of the correct term to use and establish a narrowed or more appropriate meaning.

According to Anae, culture “is sometimes regarded as a specific ethnic emblem” that on a more general level, includes other “ethnic markers such as tradition, core values, language and religion” (2001:3). She explains that culture is like the “store of knowledge, practices and experiences possessed by an ethnic group which serves as a powerful symbol of its identity” (2001:3). To clarify, then, as Anae indicated, the two terms “ethnic” and “culture” are not synonymous as some of my Samoan peers have expressed to me, rather culture is a distinctive characteristic of an ethnic group—the former (culture) exists because of the latter (ethnic group). Anae quotes Epstein (1978) to summarize that distinction and their connectedness as an interaction process “...when ethnic groups draw from their cultures, each with their own elements of affinity and identity, to mark out differences and to fix the relationship to each

other..." (Anae, 2001:3) To put it plainly, "Samoa" is the ethnic group and the "fa'asamoa," (the Samoan way) or beliefs and practices deriving from that central concept, is what we know to be the culture. Our culture, the *fa'asamoa* that most of us are raised to know as the essence of being Samoan, we use contextually to either differentiate our degree of Samoan-ness amongst and between each other; or to strengthen (or not to emphasize) ourselves as Samoan individuals, or as an ethnic group in other settings where ever/when ever it is, as determined by us, appropriate. Anae states that culture is "unevenly shared, and depends on the context of change, choice and constraint (2001:3). Like the New Zealand Samoans, as Anae states, those of us in the diaspora are in a culture that is perceived to be "strategic, constructed, fragmented, improvised, contested and so on," (Anae quotes Morton's 1998 study; Anae 2001:3) but nevertheless, our culture is fluid and not static as it appears to be in most of Hawai'i's studies. For further clarity, an example that can better illustrate Anae's statements is found in Part I, where I found myself being "*too Samoan*" in the mainland USA, "*Samoan enough*" here in Hawaii, and "*not Samoan enough*" in Samoa. Realistically, this kind of degree of Samoan-ness is not uncommon in Hawaii, and therefore, Anae's work helps to brighten that distinction between "cultural identity" and ethnic identity. The term "cultural identity" is what some local Samoans feel to be the more acceptable reference—Samoan culture, the *fa'asamoa*, being practiced as a means for retaining or promoting awareness of our being Samoan. Anae points out, too, that there are various levels of being Samoan, henceforth the term *Samoan-ness* will be used, as it seems to be an inclusive word that spans the *va(s)* that

might seem neglected.

Albert Wendt explains the Samoan concept of *va* as, *"the space between, the between-ness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together...the space that is context, giving meaning to things."* (1999:402) Wendt expresses that cultural aspects and their meanings change as relationships and contexts change. Wendt adds that it is "crucial in communal cultures that value group unity more than individualism"(1999:402) to nurture that *va* (Wendt,1999, in Hereniko and Wilson,1999:402). The word *Samoan-ness* can serve to encompass ethnic identity and culture while leaving room for different degrees to which one views oneself as a Samoan in Hawai'i and academia.

The ideas expressed in the New Zealand literature have helped to inform and shape this endeavor in terms of the progressive movement going on in New Zealand, and what I feel to be the need for a similar "transcendence" movement in literature and identity discourses among HI Samoans. More importantly, it has aided in enlightening the basis for understanding cultural and ethnic identity and its expressions with which this paper is concerned. A clearer idea of the statements by Melani Anae, in addition to the eloquence of Albert Wendt help to solidify the argument about NZ Samoan literature versus HI Samoan literature. The next section will explore some ways that *Samoan-ness* is expressed in Hawai'i.

VII. Expressing *Samoan-ness* in Hawai'i

Despite the dearth of information on identity expressions, the HI Samoans have been and continue to be engaged in celebrating a fluid, evolved

and contemporary culture, becoming more visible in displaying their Samoan-ness on their own terms, and in their own ways. Like Dr Anae indicated, degrees of Samoan-ness vary indeed, and the concern of this section of my paper is to show how Samoan-ness is expressed in Hawai'i today. HI Samoans have made their own the spaces that were once unreceptive and disapproving of them. Expressions of our Samoan-ness include manifestations such as Samoan car decals, female and male "traditional" Samoan tattoos (the male's *pe'a* and female's *malu*), Samoan dress ("traditional" Samoan attire) and the more popular Samoan dance (*siva Samoa* in Samoan or other cultural festivals, or *siva Samoa* and fire knife dancing in Polynesian shows). Photographs of each of the four mentioned forms of contemporary Samoan-ness in Hawai'i will be presented to support the text and can be found in the figures attachment. The images are in the section at the end of the paper, but when referring to certain identity markers, a reference will be made to that figure number. In discussing these forms of Samoan identity expressions, it is important to create an awareness of the manifestations as well as discussing some issues associated with each form. Presenting these diasporic identity expressions will work to gain an understanding of Hawai'i's Samoans and where we currently fit in the proliferating identity articulations that we have been left out of thus far.

VIII. Car Decals

Car decals are probably the most overlooked display of Samoan pride, or ethnic identity expression. These stickers can range anywhere from small window decals to

gigantic displays that cover the width and length of the rear window of an automobile. They are the “textual” declarations of Samoan-ness that can also assist in deciphering if someone is from independent Samoa or American Samoa. These decals depict Samoan cultural symbols and images that can, to some extent, also help one to identify, though it is not a proven skill by any means, the degree of Samoan-ness the owner of a vehicle wishes to convey (see figure 15, the “*Afakasi: Half is Better Th[a]n None*” sticker and figure 6, the *100% Samoan* sticker); the group of islands the vehicle’s owner is from (see figures 8 and 14, the Samoa government seal and figure 10, the map of Tutuila island); express someone’s religious faith (figure 11); indicate US military involvement (figure 12); and can even identify their family name (figure 13), or “hint” at a person’s socioeconomic status, especially if the Samoan car decal is on a large, expensive automobile (see figures attachment).

Much like bumper stickers, car decals are not unique to Hawai’i, although they have become quite popular among Samoans and other local Pacific Islanders. There are various Hawaiian-focused car stickers that read, “*Hawaiian Soljah*,” “*Hawaiian Built*,” “*Hawaiian Pride*,” or simply, “*Hawaiian*,” and similar expressions that can be seen just about anywhere you drive on Oahu. Although the Samoan and Hawaiian car stickers are more visible, a new “ethnic” decal has emerged recently, an indication of the increasing Micronesian population, as it says, “*Micronesian Pride*.” It is possible to conclude that this kind of expression is both an overt and subtle response to living in the US where American nationalism is encouraged and our own cultures tend to be “silenced,” and “sub-cultured”. As residents of Hawaii, under continuing US “colonialism,”

and lumped under the state's claim to be a “melting pot” of cultures, some Pacific Islanders find different avenues to assert themselves as far as expressions of cultural and ethnic identity are concerned. Samoans (and the Hawaiians and Micronesians as well) perpetuate our cultural and ethnic identities with whatever means available to us.

A few months ago, while I was surfing the Internet, I came across a blog posted by a male who, according to the information he posted, had lived here in Hawaii for less than five years. In his electronic journal, he wrote of his irritation with some of the things in Hawaii. Writing about the Oahu traffic jam, he stated that he could not understand why the Samoan car decals were so popular. He didn't see why Samoans had to declare that they were Samoans, or that they were 100% Samoan, or part of some Samoan group, as some of the stickers read. He stated, too, that he wondered if the police routinely stopped the truck he observed in front of him with a Samoan car decal.

Although I was a bit annoyed with that blog, it got me thinking. I, myself, never had a Samoan car sticker, but I've often wondered why someone would need such a public declaration. I found them unattractive, especially the very large ones that were a distraction both for other drivers and the person driving the “decal-ed” car. One day, as I was visiting my aunt, my cousin happened to stop by. I noticed that on the front of his truck, in that space just before your vision becomes obstructed, above where the window wipers fully extend, was a car sticker that read, “*Samoan Built*” in bold silver letters that looked at least six inches high. I asked my cousin why he displayed such a decal, to which he replied, “It's showing my pride in being Samoan, even though I don't speak

Samoa.” He, my first cousin, is the son of my aunt and uncle who paid for our fares, enabling us to journey to Hawai’i in 1977. His father is half Japanese and half Hawaiian. He had been to Samoa once as a toddler. While my cousin understands the Samoan language, he is unable to speak it, which caused some of his cousins to jokingly harass him over the years. Perhaps now that we are much older, and we are more aware of our Samoan-ness, he is expressing that kind of “textual declaration” for us and others to know that he is, in fact, a Samoan, despite his inability to communicate in the language. Car decals, then, can allow some Samoans to convey their ethnic and cultural pride regardless of whether or not they are able to speak Samoan. For others, it may simply be an emblem showing passion and memory for a culture and homeland that we strive to hold onto for the purposes of validating, enhancing, encouraging and constructing, unconsciously sometimes, new and evolved identities living outside of Samoa. Whatever the “bottom line” may be, the convenience of having a Samoan car decal is that the sticker can do the “talking” for you, in a sense, without actually getting into a discussion, brief or elaborate, pleasant or not, about your ethnic identity. The HI Samoans with car decals can be from any neighborhood, socioeconomic status, or educational background. Those I photographed were from Waipahu, where I live, Kalihi, downtown Honolulu, and the UH Manoa campus. That these car stickers can be seen almost anywhere on Oahu is a confirmation for “others” and Samoans that our community is expanding and we have “expanded,” too, in terms of expressing our Samoan-ness.

IX. “Looking Samoan” Is Looking Good Now

Two semesters ago, I went to school in a *puletasi*, considered by many to be “traditional” Samoan women's attire, or formal wear. I was scheduled to do a presentation on a Samoan topic, and I decided that wearing a *puletasi* for the occasion would only enhance my presentation. I was a bit taken by the reaction of those I passed as I made my way from the parking structure behind the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Kennedy Theater, towards Moore Hall where my class was held. Those I passed smiled and greeted me with “Hello,” or “Aloha.” Others I knew to be Samoan, waved, smiled and called out to me. Most surprising was the way in which the non-Samoans reacted with enthusiastic greetings and acknowledgement. As a teenager, I recall vividly being embarrassed to wear a *puletasi* to church for fear of being identified as a Samoan. Yet, there I was walking through the university's campus in my full Samoan attire and getting pleasant nods from non-Samoans. Indeed, times have changed and HI Samoans express their ethnic identity, cultural pride—their Samoan-ness—in their appearance, specifically, by dressing and “looking” Samoan. Men are also dressing Samoan, wearing the *'ie faitaga*, literally translated as “wrap-around (*lavalava*) with pockets,” (a formal version of the *'ie lavalava*) because it is usually made from the same polyester material that dress slacks or trousers are made from and includes pockets, much like pants. The *'ie lavalava* that was once frowned upon by both non-Samoans and Samoans alike when used in non-Samoan spaces during the early stages of “adjustment” is now being worn even by non-Samoan men.

About twenty years ago, I overheard the adults in my family discussing, at length, some situations in which a Samoan was seen by another Samoan “carelessly” wearing an *'ie lavalava* in places outside of the home. I remember, too, being teased by some of the Samoan teenagers in the public housing project we lived in, because my mother wore *puleitasi(s)* to work and to church. My mother is a seamstress and has sewn her own clothes for as long as I can remember, which is a sensible and cost-efficient practice considering she had to raise a total of seven children alone. It is a sad thought that she put so much hard work into making beautiful *puleitasi(s)* for us (six of us are females and only 1 male) but we were too self-conscious and embarrassed to wear them back then. Sometimes she threatened to beat us; at other times she forced us to wear them to church on Sundays. Nowadays, I am lucky if my mother can fit me into her *puleitasi* sewing schedule, as she has also used her sewing talents to earn extra money and is very successful at it. The demand for Samoan “traditional” women’s wear has grown since the 1990s when I was often “recruited” to help my mom in her budding side business, as the requests for large quantities of uniformed *puleitasi* for church *'aufaipese* (choir), *'autalavou* (church youth groups) and *'ausiva* (dance/performance groups) would come pouring in. “Dressing Samoan,” then, is due in part to the invariable nature of the Samoans’ religious practices, namely church attendance, as the older generations and more traditional Samoans continued to dress in cultural attire, unaffected by other people’s admonitions or “scare tactics.”

In this day and age, the number of Samoan cultural, beauty and scholarship pageants are rising steadily, becoming a part of the HI Samoans

expanding and evolving culture in Hawai'i. These competitive events of cultural pageantry, which usually feature a *pule'asi* category as part of the competition, have added to the heightened visibility and demand for Samoan women's "traditional" attire (see figures). The magnificent creativity seen in some of the modern *pule'asi* worn by pageant contestants, sponsors, some judges and attendees has created a fusion of "traditional" Samoan women's wear and contemporary fashion designs, resulting in a "*Samoan haute couture*." Add that to the on-going church, cultural and familial activities requiring uniformed Samoan wear, annual Samoan cultural exhibitions/festivals that also use uniformed *pule'asi*, and Polynesian shows with Samoan *siva* sections in which the female dancers are clad "imaginatively" in their versions of the *pule'asi*. In short, HI Samoans are constantly "looking" more and more Samoan these days.

Many of my mother's generation did not heed the "admonitions" of other "acculturated" Samoans who tried to deter the use of Samoan "traditional" attire like the *pule'asi* or '*ie lavalava* in public. Today, you are admired by your Samoan and non-Samoan friends when you don the *pule'asi*, especially if its contemporary and cultural designs are extraordinary and original.

Unfortunately, my mother's generation seems to have been the last of the Samoan seamstresses, and as the popularity of the attire grows, the number of those who can actually design and sew a good *pule'asi* is declining, with those such as my mom becoming older and unable to keep up with the supply and demand. Locally, Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese dressmakers, as well as tailors based in Tutuila, American Samoa, have taken on the new generation's growing interest in the "traditional" attire. "Dressing Samoan" is probably the

most practical and commonly observed expression of Samoan-ness amongst the HI Samoans, as all ages, sizes and shapes are participants.

Samoan male's *'ie faitaga*, the “dressy” version of the *'ie lavalava*,” are not as much a “hot” item as the *puleasi* in the fashion sense. The heightened popularity of Samoan attire is attributed mostly to women; however, men's *'ie lavalava* are commonly used in and out of Samoan spaces. Once a week on Sundays at churches, or after church at the Polynesian markets such as Tammy's in Waipahu, you can find many Samoan males in their *'ie faitaga*. Although HI Samoan men use *'ie faitaga* to many cultural events, they still pale in comparison to the popularity of the women's *puleasi*.

Since the mid-late 1990s, I have observed the use of the *'ie lavalava* by Samoan youth. This observation began when I noticed that my own younger siblings and cousins wore *'ie lavalava* to school. Whenever I would give my siblings and relatives a ride to school, I noticed other Samoan teens with an *'ie lavalava* either wrapped over their pants, or hanging like a scarf from around their necks. One afternoon when I went to Waipahu High School to pick up my siblings, I caught the ending of a fist-fight between some teenage boys just outside of the school's campus by the bus stop where my sisters waited for me. The fight was being broken up by the time I got a clear view of the commotion, just as one of the boys involved walked past my car, with an *'ie lavalava* wrapped over his jeans. This kid who appeared to be a non-Samoan to me, was yelling at the other boys, using profanity that included some very bad Samoan “swear” words. When my sisters got in the car I asked if they knew that kid, and if he was Samoan at all, and they said he was not. I was angered

and bothered by this observation of someone who was not Samoan, but appeared to be due to the *lavalava* he wore and the profane Samoan words he yelled. That kind of “mistaken” identity is unnecessary and “negative” when witnessed by anyone. Unfortunately, that is sometimes the case with some non-Samoans that attempt to become “Samoan-ized” because they have many close Samoan friends, or they are attracted to the culture. In actuality, not only are they completely unaware of the Samoan culture, they do not realize that their negative actions and misuse of Samoan words while “appearing” to be a Samoan is adding to existing negative perceptions. To be frank, it is not that Samoans dislike those who may act Samoan or make themselves appear to be Samoan; on the contrary-- Samoans rather enjoy that non Samoans would appreciate their strong and unique culture . In order to avoid a confusing misappropriation of Samoan identity, the challenge is: should we stop Samoan kids from wearing *lavalavas* to school, or do we let them continue, as it is a form of expressing Samoan-ness?

X. Le Tatau: Samoan Tattoo

Over the course of the last nearly ten years, the ancient Samoan art of tattoo, the *tatau*, has developed into a modern form of ethnic and cultural identity expression, spreading among some HI Samoans with immense popularity. Easily accessible through the tattoo artist *Sulu'ape Petelo Su'a* himself, the *tatau* or *malofie Samoa*, is now almost a common adornment of some Samoan men and women in Hawai'i. Once practiced as a rite of passage in the days of old, the *tatau* is now widely seen on young and old HI Samoans alike.

Three members of my family were tattooed when the *tufuga ta tatau*, the tattoo artist, began large scale commissions about eight or nine years ago. When in Hawai'i, the *tufuga* stays with an uncle of mine most of the time, also in Waipahu town near where I live. It became a routine for me to stop over at my relative's house whenever the artist *Sulu'ape* was in town for a "job," especially during the times when my family members, my sister and brother were being tattooed. As the years went by, my observations of the art's accessibility and growing popularity became more frequent. I grew increasingly aware, and somewhat uncomfortable with the number of people that the tattoo artist and his entourage would take on, in addition to the accessibility and commercialization of the art. In fact, as recently as three weeks ago, in the month of November, 2008, I attended a ceremony celebrating the completion of the arduous artwork, and observed nearly 30 people expressing their Samoan-ness with the *tatau*.

"...*tatauing* is part of everything else that is the people, the *aiga*, the village, the community, the environment, the *atua*, the cosmos. It is a way of life that relates the *tufuga ta tatau* to the person being tataued and their community and history and beliefs relating to service, courage, masculinity, femininity, gender, identity, sexuality, beauty, symmetry, balance, aptness, and other art forms and the future, because a *tatau* or a *malu* is for the rest of your life and when you die, your children will inherit its reputation and stories, your stories, stories about you and your relationships. The *tatau* and *malu* are not just beautiful decoration, they are scripts-texts-testimonies to do with relationships, order, form and so

on. And when they were threatened with extinction by colonialism, Samoa was one of the few places where *tatau* refused to die. *Tatau* became defiant texts or scripts of nationalism and identity. Much of the indigenous was never colonized, tamed or erased" (Albert Wendt, 1999;403 in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999).

The *tatau* as an identity expression, as Wendt tells us, is a representation of the essence of Samoan-ness. As the the quote conveys, there is so much more to the art than its physical beauty. For example:

- The legend of the art's origin tells of Samoan female conjoined twins bringing the *tatau* from Fiji to Samoa. The *tatau*, then, reminds us of Samoa's rich oral history and our pre-Euro-American past, especially our pre-contact relationships with neighboring Pacific Islands such as Fiji.
- The art involves nurturing the intricate *va(s)*, the spaces between that connect the *tatau-d* person to everyone and everything in the environment, land and cosmos of the past, present and future. Thus, in current times, the art serves to inform the *tatau-d* of the cultural history; it links one to ancestors, *aiga* networks, and the *fa'asamoa*; and acts as a guiding force in cultural, spiritual, familial and communal practices today.
- That the *tatau* will forever be on the body symbolizes enduring Samoan cultural, historical, spiritual and familial relationships that are also as persistent in mind, body and soul of contemporary Samoans.
- Finally, according to Wendt, it is an everlasting symbol of the spirit of a people that could not be extinguished by colonialism's attempts, as the *tatau* may have been somewhat "silenced" temporarily, but not

conquered by missionary efforts.

For some HI Samoans, the *tatau* is the perfect physical identity expression that demonstrates their definition of, or their self-perceptions and ideal feelings of what being Samoan is. For others, it is the key they need as a link for their children and their children's children to keep the Samoan ethnic identity alive, especially among those whose children are born and educated in Hawai'i, having little or no exposure to the homeland, culture and language. For many diasporic Samoans, the *tatau* is an irrefutable public declaration of one's identity, encompassing ethnicity, culture and history.

Although the use of the *tatau* by some as an idyllic expression of Samoan-ness is understandable, appreciated and admirable, there are others who may not completely be aware of the art's significance. There are those who obtain the tattoo for its aesthetic purposes, as it enhances their Samoan appearance, such as some professional Polynesian dancers that I know of. Through casual conversations with several individuals who were recently tattooed, it is clear that many are unaware of the oral history behind the art. Some of these people have very little knowledge of the markings and motifs, and very few of the tattooed HI Samoans are able to understand the Samoan language and customs associated with the *tatau*. A little over a decade ago while I was still an entertainer, there were just two fire knife dancers on Oahu island I knew who had the *pe'a*. Currently, however, it is quite normal to see several Samoan male dancers in the same show, aside from fire knife dancers, adorned in the *la'ei Samoa*, the *tatau*. Pronounced, too, are the number of non-Samoan local males being *tatau-d*. What drives contemporary HI Samoans who

have little familiarity with the *tatau* to seek such a strong, permanent and sacred procedure to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity? Furthermore, why do non-Samoans desire the intricate and painful procedure as an identity marker for themselves if they are not Samoan?

Mallon explains that there have been many non Samoans who were *tatau*-d, including some Peace Corps volunteers and beachcombers of the early contact era. While Mallon acknowledges the controversial reality of the tattooed non Samoans, he expresses that in the past, the *tufuga* traveled between villages as well as outside of Samoa to Tonga and other islands to tattoo non Samoans (Mallon, 2002:110). It is not an unusual practice, therefore, that modern day artists such as Sulu'ape Petelo practice the same principles of traveling outside of Samoa to different spaces to tattoo non Samoans. Furthermore, Mallon also included the following about the *tatau* in diasporic communities:

"Today among migrant Samoan communities, the *tatau* is seen as a strong statement of heritage and identity...there has been a transformation in terms of who can receive a tattoo, where and how it is displayed and how it is paid for. Within the new social and geographic contexts that the Samoans are increasingly finding themselves in, new ways of thinking about and interpreting the art form have emerged" (Mallon, 2002:110)

As Mallon points out, the *tatau*, much like our evolving cultural and ethnic identity, is subject to negotiations in modern environments, undergoing transformations, though it still remains an overall identity marker for those who have an appreciation of the art's history and aesthetic (Mallon, 2002:111). According to Mallon's statement, as long as one admires and appreciates the significance of the *tatau*, especially as an identity expression in diasporic

communities, one is able to negotiate and purchase the tattoo within contemporary settings, and with modern resources afforded for that purpose and available in diasporic communities. This, then, may alleviate a bit of the controversy and displeasure towards some of the recently tattooed generation. After all, when the art is made accessible to Samoans outside of “traditional” spaces, then it would be as if you walked into a tattoo parlor in Hawai’i, choose your tattoo design and pay cash for it. In this light, it might be easier to understand the accessibility issue, and begin to realize why some non Samoans, with no Samoan ties or prior knowledge of the “traditional” art, would jump on the *tatau* bandwagon. As for diasporic Samoans seeking the art as an indelible identity expression in Hawai’i, perhaps it is due to some level of defiance amongst some members of the modern generation looking for a way to convey a “reckless disregard” for the western systems’ authorities, negative experiences which may have affected one’s identity, or “traditional” constraints of the *fa’asamoa*, or other customary institutions which once dictated social behavior. Along the line of the defiance issue, some recently tattooed females have expressed to me that the *malu*, the female’s *tatau*, is not only a powerful identity expression for diasporic Samoan women, but it also serves to empower women in the conventional western sense. Moreover, as second, third and subsequent generations of diasporic Samoans become more and more disconnected from cultural and ethnic practices and beliefs, obtaining the *tatau* may become that identity marker that will either be symbolic of ultimate defiance towards Samoan “traditions” and western conventions, or represent a cultural and ethnic past that is far removed but desired. Regardless of people’s reasons

behind having the *tatau*, however, it remains a very dominant expression (physically, mentally and emotionally) of one's Samoan-ness, especially in migrant communities, as there is no emphasis or requirement for language proficiency for the *tatau-d*.

With that being said, and with all due respect to the *tufuga ta tatau* and those HI Samoans with the *tatau*, I have observed with uneasiness some unpleasant situations surrounding the growing popularity and increasing commercialization of the Samoan tattoo. I had been debating whether or not to include these observations in my reflection, because I do not wish to offend anyone, or “lessen” in any way the value of the *tatau* as a strong cultural and ethnic identity expression among Samoans in general. However, I want to express a perceived “down side” of the tattoo in contemporary times, to inform others and create an awareness of the effect of globalization on Samoa's art. I wish, also, to express that I do admire the courage of those who have undergone the painful application of the *tatau*. To endure such pain by a Samoan shows how much one truly loves his or her Samoan-ness. Nevertheless, I want to share an observation that started my uneasiness with the misappropriation of the Samoan art. The woman I speak about may be found online by simply using Google to search for Sulu'ape Angela, or Angela Bolson . Photos of her doing *tatau* may be viewed on www.myspace.com/suluapeangela.

Nearly ten years ago, the *tufuga ta tatau* Sulu'ape Petelo Su'a started performing large scale *tatau*ing procedures in Hawaii. From that time until just one month ago, the artist has stayed with my relatives in Waipahu when

commissioned to tatau by local Samoans. That first group that I remember included a cousin of mine and my uncle who hosted the artist and his entourage. Together there were only about ten of them and the subsequent groups remained steadily between ten to fifteen every two years or so.

In 2002, my only brother decided that he was ready to be among those who were to be tattooed then. We were the only two of my immediate family residing in Hawaii, and upon hearing news of her only son's decision to undergo the risky procedure, my mother made sure to task me with certain feau(s), or customary obligations and chores that family members (mainly me) of the "tattoo-ee" were responsible for. These feau(s) included sitting and praying near the area where the actual procedure was going on, so as to comfort my brother during the difficult course of the tattoo. For six weeks, I attended to the needs of my brother, my relatives hosting the artist as well as the artist himself. Between my extended family members and me, we cooked and served daily meals, provided drinks and ran errands to replenish supplies for the house and the guests. During that time, I became fairly associated with the tufuga and his assistants. Among the tufuga's entourage that aided in the tattooing was a Caucasian woman about my age, named Angela, or as she was Samoan-ized by some of my family members, "Anela." Angela was from California and had met Sulu'ape Petelo at a tattoo convention in Tahiti. She became fascinated by the Samoan art and soon befriended Sulu'ape, even gaining consent by the tufuga to stay with him in Samoa for over one year while he taught her how to tatau the Samoan way.

A little while following the time of my brother's procedure, we heard news

of Angela's claims that she had been given the honorary title of Sulu'ape by the tufuga himself. When Sulu'ape got news of Angela's statements via Angela's Californian tattoo shop's website, he was upset but it was too late. I learned months later that shortly after that tatau commission when I met her, Angela departed from Sulu'ape's company and returned to her home in California. She promptly set up her tattoo business in which she features the Samoan tatau and its motifs either wholly or partially in those trendy tribal designs that seem popular with contemporary tattoo fans. Sulu'ape has been trying to reach her since then to set her assertions straight, and I am unsure if he was ever able to reach and correct Angela's claims.

The "Angela" story offers a reason behind my growing personal discomfort towards the widespread and rising commercialization of the tatau. Having known the woman, I found nothing about her that is congruent with the Samoan culture, values, history and aesthetic of the *tatau*. To know that Angela has taken the skills, instruments and value of the Samoan *tatau* to her California tattoo parlor is unsettling and disturbing, and I cannot help but wonder why Sulu'ape would frivolously "give away" Samoa's persistent art form to an oblivious foreigner. Others in the tattooed community young and old have expressed their disconcerting opinions over casual discussions and many have conveyed their disapproval of Sulu'ape's decision to teach this "pierce-bodied, multiple-tattooed, disrespectful and undeserving *palagi* woman" the *tatau-ing* process. The following quotes, which can be found online, also through the Google search engine, give some idea on the current Angela situation and her assertions as a "*tufuga*:"

“...Angela Bolson, 32, a San Diego artist who claims to be the only woman in the world to be honored with the Samoan title of [S]ulu'ape (chief) by virtue of her mastering the art of Western Samoan hand-tap tattooing...” (Meadow, 2006).

“I earned my first title of Sulu'ape by being his student, and finishing my apprenticeship, and proving that I have the heart to do this...I am preparing to earn the additional title of Sua showing my teacher I can tattoo with grace” (Sulu'ape Angela, 2008).

It has been three years since I last visited my uncle's home when the tufuga was in town, but on November 14, 2008 (just one month ago today) when I attended a celebration for the recently tattooed, I witnessed a group of nearly thirty people that were tattooed in the approximately six weeks that the artist was here. I attended the ceremony initially for the purpose of obtaining photos for this project, but I was surprised to learn that I knew six of the people who recently got tataued and so I stayed on to support some of them. Additionally, there has been a steady trend among local Polynesian and fire knife dancers to get tattooed, and one of my friends who's a fire knife dancer in a Waikiki Polynesian show was among the recent large group.

There has been a tendency for the majority of the tattooed HI Samoans to opt for monetary substitutes instead of customary practices surrounding the *tatau*. Monetary compensations often account for a huge amount of money circulating around the art even before Sulu'ape actually arrives. Before commissioning the *tufuga*, those interested gather a group of individuals who want to be tataued, collect at least \$500.00—\$1,000.00 of the \$2,000.00 (sometimes \$2,500.00) total price, arrange for housing, contact the tufuga for actual scheduling and wire the money to cover the expenses for him and his

assistants to make the trip to Hawaii. Upon completion of the tatau the balance is given over as well as additional monetary and some “traditional” or western material gifts. If we do the math based on the recent group, this past commission probably fetched between \$50,000.00-\$60,000.00 USD, which amounts up to an even larger sum when converted to Samoan tala (Samoa's currency), because the tufuga lives in Upolu.

I had to read through Albert Wendt's “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body” (in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999:399) three times to find some focus and “fresh air” after considering all of the above information, or else I would not be able to proceed with my reflections on the tatau as a contemporary expression of Samoan-ness among HI Samoans. Maybe I shouldn't have relieved my Angela irritation, or attempt to analyze the commercial side of the practice specifically. At any rate, Wendt's reflection is a much needed reprieve from the frustration derived from close and personal observations of the Samoan cultural art gone super commercial, even as far as a California *palagi* woman's tattoo shop, where she claims to be a Sulu'ape. But, as much as Wendt conveys that it would be wrong to assume that non-Samoans should not be *tatau-d*, there are instances where there needs to be more selectivity on whom the art should be passed onto, and who has “earned” the *tatau* as far as possessing some knowledge of the Samoan culture, an appreciation for the “traditional” art's origins, or at least a deep admiration for its intricate beauty. There are some non-Samoans that may truly be the special and deserving ones, but there are many more Samoans and non Samoans only looking for personal aesthetic or professional enhancement, as expressed to me by some of my own tattooed

male friends. It would be ideal if the tufuga would consider having a pre-tattoo orientation in which he could educate the tatau candidates on the Samoan art, especially as it is used as a contemporary identity marker. But if it is made available outside of Samoa, are diasporic Samoans held to the same expectations as those who are island-based, or are they indeed allowed to negotiate the acquisition of the *tatau*, much like a modern identity might be negotiated? (This reflection is offered in order to express a point without meaning any offense towards the tufuga, his family, my family and those Samoans who are *tatau-d*.)

XI. Siva Samoa: Dancing Samoans and Samoans Dancing

Even more widespread than the *tatau*, is the expression of Samoan-ness through the art of the *siva*, or Samoan dance. Before going further, a clear definition of the *siva* Samoa that I am referring to must be made: Hawaii's unique mixture of cultures, primarily Polynesian, and tourism industry that draws millions of visitors annually (4.6 million in 2007, DBEDT) has heightened the production of Polynesian shows throughout the state. A Polynesian revue, as it suggests, incorporates cultural dances, that are claimed to be "authentically" of the respective Polynesian island countries from which the dances have been imported. Among the most popular of these "authentic" Polynesian cultural dances commonly found in all the huge production shows are the Samoan group dances, or *ma'ulu'ulu*; the Samoan male's "slap" dance, or *siva fa'ataupati*; the *taualuga*, the solo dance finale that the *taupou*, or a female performs at the end of Samoan festivities or ceremonies; and the most well known, the *siva afi*, or fire knife dance. These Samoan *siva* are done together

in what's considered a Polynesian show's "Samoa section," and usually presented as the last portion of the show, with the Samoan fire knife dance, the *siva afi* as the climactic finish. In referring to expressing Samoan-ness through the art of the *siva* Samoa, then, it will encompass all of the aforementioned unless otherwise stated.

Polynesian Shows: A Brief Overview

Before proceeding with reflections on the *siva Samoa* as an expression of Samoan-ness in Hawai'i, it is necessary to give some information on the two largest Polynesian entertainment companies in Hawai'i, in addition to an estimate of the amount of tourists that visit these productions. The Polynesian Cultural Center and Tihati Productions, Ltd are currently dominating Oahu island in show popularity and duration of operation in the state. The former, a Mormon-owned non-profit establishment, employs a great number of Samoans as well as other Pacific Islanders, while the latter is owned by Jack Tihati Thompson, a part-Samoan entrepreneur. These entertainment shows, in addition to others such as Paradise Cove Luau, Germaine's Luau, Malu Productions and Kalo's Polynesian Revue, are largely responsible for Hawai'i's "Polynesian" image, as they are often represented as idyllic Polynesians in Hawai'i's tourism propaganda.

It is perhaps a well known fact that Hawai'i has one of the most robust and thriving tourism industries. In 2007, over 4.6 million visitors arrived in Honolulu, Hawai'i, according to last year's Annual Visitor Research Report. Of that number, 67% remained on Oahu island, with 51% having purchased "group

tours or package trips.” (DBEDT visitor stats, 2007. p71-72). It is highly likely that the 51% that bought Hawai'i tour packages attended a Polynesian or Luau show which are frequently advertised in the state as part of typical tourist packages promising to be the places for visitors to “experience the spirit of aloha.” The largest of these Polynesian revues and Luau shows are the Polynesian Cultural Center on the north shore of Oahu and Tihati Productions primarily based in Waikiki.

The most visited of these entertainment shows is the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) in Laie, Oahu (DBEDT, 2007). Considered the world's largest Polynesian extravaganza, the PCC has hosted over 33 million visitors since it opened in 1963 . Aside from providing employment opportunities for Laie's multi-cultural community members, of which Samoans are a large majority, the Mormon owned establishment has aided nearly 17,000 Pacific and Asian students to finance their education at the nearby Brigham Young University through work-study programs. The PCC hosts approximately 2,000 visitors daily and the center's tour/show/dinner packages range from \$58.00/adult general admission to \$215.00/adult VIP specials (PCC website, 2008).

Initially established for the purpose of preserving the Polynesian cultures of the BYU students and providing them with jobs, the center's founders designed the 42-acre facility as a Polynesian microcosm with villages representing different island countries such as Hawai'i, Tonga, New Zealand, Marquesas (village activities only and not included in the night show), Tahiti, Fiji, Samoa and the most recently included, Rapa Nui (village activities only and not included in the night show). In each of the miniature Polynesian “islands,”

almost the entire staff is from that particular island country. For instance, in the Samoan village, there are between 15-20 workers on a daily basis. Every time I have been there (and I go there about 5 times a year), I have observed an all Samoan crew hard at work entertaining large groups of tourists. Additionally, BYU students from here and abroad make up the cast of the center's fabulous Polynesian production.

An interesting thing to note about the center is that the performance of dances from each of the different Polynesian islands is not restricted to those islanders only. For instance, Samoan students that I know personally can be seen performing the Hawaiian hula as well as "traditional" dances of the Tahitians, Maori, Tongans and so on. The multi-cultural Laie community, BYU and the PCC allow for an ethnic interchangeability that is unique to Hawai'i, as it is common in Polynesian shows, adding to a development of a strong pan-Polynesian culture among many of the Laie community members, especially the performers themselves.

Another example of that kind of pan-Polynesian "identity" and cultural interchanging can be observed at Tihati Productions, owned by the Thompsons, a part-Samoan, Tokelauan, Hawaiian family. Nearly 40 years in business, Tihati Productions is the only entertainment company with shows on Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii islands. Capitalizing on Hawai'i's tourism industry as well the state's "melting pot of cultures," Tihati's is a multi-million dollar business, earning between \$10--\$25 million in yearly sales (Center Spoke business website). On Oahu island alone, the company has shows at the Sea Life Park, Turtle Bay Hilton Resort, Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Sheraton Princess Kaiulani Hotel and the

Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel. The main show at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani Hotel runs five nights a week, entertaining approximately 2,000 visitors weekly with a cast of fifty employees (Harada, 2008). In a conversation with Misty Thompson Tufono, daughter of the owners and Tihati's overall Operations Manager and Maui Vice President, she stated of the company's main Polynesian revue at the Sheraton:

"Of the 50 cast members on payroll at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani, 36% are of Samoan blood. This number fluctuates naturally with turnover, and I think it may have been much higher in earlier years, but this is the current percentage of Samoans working at the main show in Waikiki" (Tufono, 2008).

Tihati Productions' Polynesian Spectacular at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani Hotel includes dances of Hawai'i, Tonga, Fiji, Maori, Tahiti, the Tuamotus, Rarotonga and Samoa, with Afatia Thompson, son of the owners, as the featured fire knife dancer.

"Dance, music...and the arts have always functioned as the primary vehicles for creating, recording, sharing and transforming knowledge. These forms...provide the glue for social cohesion and mediate relations between the human, supernatural and ancestral realms...Christianity and the written word have altered the style and content of dance and music in most islands. Still, these art forms continue to function as the most visible markers of cultural and national identities. Today cultural dances build self-esteem and instill pride in both performers and audiences, particularly in the younger generations who exist at the nexus of competing local, national and global forces." (Katerina M. Teaiwa, essays on *Dances of Life*)

The most widespread form of expressing Samoan-ness in Hawai'i currently is the *siva Samoa*, Samoan dance . Whether it is the *taualuga* (usually a female solo dance, but can be performed by a male as well), a *ma'ulu'ulu* (group dance), *fa'ataupati* (male's slap dance) or the very popular *siva afi* (fire

knife dance), Samoan dance has become inextricably linked with Hawai'i's tourism industry through the immense popularity of Polynesian shows, in addition to the growing number of visible Samoan and other Pacific Islander community cultural festivals. The popularity of Hawai'i's Polynesian entertainment productions have taken Samoan dance into the local and national limelight. Shows such as the PCC and Tihati's feature Samoan *siva* sections with the *siva afi*, the Samoan fire knife dance as the evening's grand finale. Some HI Samoans find the excitement of performing cultural *siva* in these kinds of venues to be the "comfort zone" for embracing Samoan-ness, as well as developing an appreciation for other Pacific or Polynesian cultures.

As important as it is to note that HI Samoans have been successful in expressing themselves through dance in this commercial arena, it is necessary to point out the cultural interchanging that occurs amongst performers in, or as part of being in Polynesian revues and Hawai'i's tourism industry. For instance, there are Samoan dancers doing Hawaiian, Maori, Tongan, Fijian and Tahitian dances, as well as non-Samoans performing Samoan *siva*. The local tourism industry often capitalizes on the "Polynesian-ness" of Hawai'i's shows, as part of the "Hawaiian" culture, selling Hawai'i's "melting pot of cultures" image throughout the nation and the world. Likewise, Samoans can be seen representing Hawai'i or its "Polynesian-ness" through marketing publicities for Polynesian shows. Moreover, some Samoans are hired specifically to pose and appear as "Hawaiians" for tourism or other Hawaiian product advertisements such as postcards, pamphlets and posters. Lastly, through the popularity of these Polynesian shows, Hollywood representations of Hawai'i and the *hula*, as

well as romantic notions of the “dusky maiden” and noble savage, are clearly reinforced, and Samoans are often photographed in images depicting these romanticized views and representations. According to Spickard as long as someone is Polynesian or Pacific Islander, that person is accepted by the group, as part of the multi-cultural environment (Spickard, 2002). To understand this from a Samoan point is to know what matters most to many of the contemporary diasporic Polynesians and Pacific people, especially in the US. As I have experienced and observed recently with a pan Pacific group of mostly graduate students from around the Pacific here at the university, when one is living outside of one's island country, other Pacific people one meets in the diaspora become a source of close, near-kin association.

At the state level, Samoan dance in the entertainment industry has worked to our advantage, surmounting much of the early negative prejudices and persisting stereotypes that had rendered us somewhat non participatory in expressing our ethnic and cultural identity. However, through the state's tourism industry and Polynesian shows, HI Samoans have morphed into a Polynesian voice through celebrating our ethnicity in popularized cultural *siva* performances as well as performing other Polynesian cultures' dances. Significant, too, is the common occurrence that shows some Hawai'i Samoan models representing Hawaii and Hawaiians in general, as a result of the interchangeability of Polynesian cultures that the entertainment and tourism industry have promoted. While acknowledging the success of many of my friends that are models and dancers featured in advertisements for entertainment shows, I am also aware of the kind of representation aspects that can create some confusion,

disillusionment and possible hostile feelings from Hawaiians and other Polynesian cultures that Samoans are made to represent. Through the “melting pot/Polynesian-ness” image disseminated state and nation-wide, Hawaii's tourism industry is now benefiting from a new-found confidence in our Samoan-ness. Samoan dance and the issues that can be raised around that topic on a state level are very difficult sometimes to acknowledge, let alone dissect and fairly analyze, for irregardless of some representation issues, Samoans are merely performing according to the circumstances and environment presented. The fact that this kind of cultural interchanging and “misrepresentation” does occur should be acknowledged but with an understanding of the contemporary, diasporic and commercial nature in which we continue to find ourselves.

At the community level, however, Samoan Performing Arts Festivals are held annually by the older, more traditional generation in order to encourage youth interest and participation in cultural and community building efforts. In Honolulu, the *Samoan Cultural Arts Federation (SCAF)* hosts the *Samoa Mo Samoa Cultural Festival* every July and works with community and church leaders to gain the participation of their respective youth groups. Also, the *Atoa-O-Ali'i*, a council of Samoan chiefs in Hawaii who have been holding the *Samoan Flag Day Celebration* for the last 40 years in Honolulu, continue their efforts annually in the month of August, using the *Samoan Flag Day Commemoration* as a foundation for youth involvement and interest in the culture. Every year in May as well, the Laie community puts on a huge Samoan performing arts festival at the Polynesian Cultural Center, the *We Are Samoa Festival*, in which the Samoan clubs from Hawaii high schools and state

universities display their knowledge of culture through dance exhibitions, basket weaving, coconut husking, oratory and the like. Combined with the PCC *We Are Samoa Festival* is another Laie original, the *World Fire Knife Competition* which follows the daytime cultural exhibitions of the *We Are Samoa Festival*. This Fire Knife Competition draws mostly young competitors from Samoa, American Samoa, California, Florida, Utah, Tahiti and Hawaii, among others. The three finalists from the competition are incorporated into the PCC's Polynesian show for that one evening, and both locals and tourists are treated to a marvelous display of flames and aptitude.

Each of these performing arts festivals are geared toward the involvement of the young generation of Hawai'i-born Samoans primarily through the excitement of the *siva*. The *siva Samoa*, Samoan dance, as Katerina Teaiwa states above, is the most "visible marker" of Samoan cultural and ethnic identity which appeals to the younger generation as the desired form of expressing Samoan-ness. Samoan music contains a wealth of oral and historical accounts of Samoan life, ancestral connections, cultural beliefs and practices, while dance motions depict Samoan village activities such as the 'ava or *kava* ceremony. Participation in these cultural festivals not only provide the youth with cultural familiarization, it also instills within them a sense of pride in being Samoan. For example, during the Laie community's *We Are Samoa Festival*, many Samoan youth and their families remain after the cultural festival to witness the PCC's fire knife competition and night show to cheer for and be enthralled by other Samoan performers.

Another contemporary display of the art of Samoan dance in a more

competitive fashion is seen through the rising Samoan cultural, beauty and scholarship pageants in which young Samoan women compete for prizes and scholarship monies in categories such as sarong/*lavalava*, talent, interview, Samoan cultural dress and the *siva Samoa* via the *taualuga*, or female solo performance. For example, the *Miss Samoa-Hawaii* cultural and beauty pageant sponsored by the more “traditional” generation, the *Atoa-O-Ali’i* in recent years, and the *Miss Le Lalelei O Samoa* cultural scholarship pageant hosted by a group representing the younger generation, the *United Samoan Organization of Hawaii (USOH)*, require the young women participants to be part-Samoan and somewhat knowledgeable in the Samoan *siva*. Most of the young ladies competing in these types of pageants often seek the help of Samoan dance instructors to hone and enhance their *siva* skills. During the evening of actual pageantry of these events, the *siva Samoa* category is the highlight of the audience's appreciation and participants' cultural exhibition.

When I was 18 and 19, my mother entered me in the Miss Samoa-Hawaii Pageant two years in a row, much against my will. The first year I was first runner-up and the second year I was not a finalist, but I was recruited by the Tihati Productions Operations manager who emceed the event to join the company's Sheraton Princess Kaiulani Hotel Polynesian Revue. At age 19, I was still very uncomfortable with my Samoan-ness, especially in places outside Samoan functions. The nine and half years I worked for Tihati Productions provided me a very unique opportunity to re-discover and embrace my Samoan-ness through the *siva*, as I was often assigned to do the *taualuga* solo performance in the nightly show. For the last three years, I have been a

member of the *United Samoan Organization of Hawaii (USOH)*, working as a group of young Samoans to organize and sponsor a Samoan scholarship pageant, as well as engaging the youth in cultural familiarization and perpetuation through the *siva Samoa*. *USOH* also donates our manpower and labor to help the older generation that coordinate the *We Are Samoa Festival* and the *Samoa Mo Samoa Festival*, in addition to group participation in the *Samoa Flag Day Celebration*. At this community level, then, younger generation groups such *USOH* often work together with the more “traditional” elders in uniting our HI Samoan youth through the performing arts events. *Siva* is the most visible marker of Samoan-ness in Hawai’i and is also the most important factor contributing to the “social cohesion” of HI Samoan youth and their expressions of Samoan-ness in contemporary times.

XII. Conclusion:

“Signposts exist along the way to help us understand who we are. The oral histories, imaginative literature, and the visual and performing arts of the Pacific Islands indicate significant moments in the evolution of cultural identities.” (Vilsoni Hereniko, in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999: 138)

“...there are relationships between people and the[ir] environment, people and the spirit world, people and the authorities that govern their lives. There are interracial relationships, and people relating to their pasts and to their futures.” (Patricia Grace, in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999:70-71)

For as long as New Zealand Samoans have been producing music, literature, films and documentaries, I have been among the many rejoicing in and celebrating the excitement of their accomplishments. When I first decided to do this project, I asked myself, “Why can’t HI Samoans do what the NZ

Samoans are doing?" I often consider ways to encourage a creative progression similar to the New Zealand case, but without thoroughly understanding why things are the way they are. Through the course of writing this paper, marked differences have surfaced providing a more informed understanding of the situations affecting both NZ and HI Samoans, and the paths that have led us to this point where we can express our Samoan-ness.

Important to note, first of all, is although both groups experienced similar acculturation challenges and negative perceptions, some unique factors in the NZ Samoan case have led to their current progressive situation and remain key determinants in their revolutionary identity expressions. Currently, New Zealand-based Pacific Islands and western scholars are engaged in ongoing decolonization movements that have shaped an empowered generation of Pacific Islanders, especially NZ Samoans. This is evident in literature such as Albert Wendt's novels and studies by Anae, Macpherson and Pitt. Creative and academic writings from New Zealand indicate an active movement by Samoans and Pacific Islanders towards transcending a colonial legacy and hegemony. New Zealand-based writers promote a wider consciousness of NZ Samoans' migration, transition, socioeconomic and sociocultural situations, serving as an impetus for NZ Samoans' awareness, and consequently, stimulating individual and collective efforts towards cultural pride and ethnic identity expressions.

From a more historical perspective, the New Zealand occupation and administration of the now independent Samoa helped to familiarize both New Zealand residents and Samoan people of each other. Generally, the *palagi* of New Zealand possessed prior knowledge of the homogeneity of the Samoans

before the migration (Mayer, 2008). Significant, too, is that Samoan migration to New Zealand came about largely because the former administrators sought Pacific Islanders as laborers and recruited the Samoans for employment in the country's budding economy. HI Samoans, on the other hand, traveled here in a rather indirect and unexpected way. The closing of the US military base and the creation of infrastructure, primarily the airports and airline services, increased Hawai'i's accessibility, especially economic advantages for those American Samoans who had come to adapt to the US military-stimulated Tutuila economy. With regards to this larger second wave, those Samoans were authorized and given passage by the US military. Hawai'i residents had little or no prior knowledge of the Samoans or their relationship to the US, Hawai'i or the Navy. This explains the alarmed, unreceptive and negative attitudes of Hawai'i's people to the arrival of the Samoan migrants, as seen in the first studies of the 1950s.

According to the literature, the 1970s brought a common shift towards an awareness for both NZ and HI Samoans. New Zealand's Pacific Islanders recognized early on their struggles, specifically following the country's economic recession and the subsequent violent conflicts via the government raids on PI and NZ Samoan homes. NZ Samoans endured physical, emotional and mental challenges along with transitional difficulties resulting from the conflicts and "dawn raids" of the 70s in which Pacific Islanders were subjected to violent and forceful searches of their homes. Human injustices, overt racism and social disparity endured by Pacific Islanders in New Zealand led to a collective unification of New Zealand-born/raised Pacific young people, the *Polynesian*

Panthers. This group's determination and grass roots efforts helped to unite Pacific Islanders in a heightened awareness of their respective ethnic, cultural, educational, social and communal situations, leading to outreach attempts that included informing the old and young generations, protests and demonstrations which strengthened the connections between Pacific people in New Zealand (Masters, 2006). The challenges and perseverance of New Zealand's Pacific Islanders, then, is perhaps the primary catalyst behind the NZ Samoans successful modern identity expressions, as more unified efforts by NZ PIs and the NZ government eventually resulted in a commitment to fund, encourage and support PI cultural and ethnic projects .

Of course, educational advancement was one of the primary goals homologous to both NZ and HI Samoan migrants. In terms of education and acculturation, New Zealand and Hawai'i both created bilingual educational programs, with Hawai'i starting as early as the 1960s under the state's Compensatory Education Program (Irwin, 1968). Despite Hawai'i's early head start at developing systemic processes (compensatory and bilingual educational programs) to aid the migrants' transition, limited US funding could not offer continuous support for the state's initiatives. At this point where Hawai'i declines due to lack of funding, New Zealand continues, eventually turning into an on-going program, because the NZ government continued to sponsor these PI focused projects. For HI Samoans, unfortunately, the deficiency in similar funding by the US for PI ethnic and cultural endeavors is among the primary hindrances for HI Samoans' non participation in comparable identity articulations.

In contrast to New Zealand's PI focused government, Hawai'i has been largely an Asian-oriented state before the advent of the Samoans and the period of indigenous renaissance. Ethnic groups like the Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos have made Hawai'i their home since the flourishing plantation era (Mayer, 2008). As Hawai'i experienced the Samoan migration, the state had little resources to accommodate the newcomers. Furthermore, current resources existing for NZ Samoans are in an abundance, and promote the creation of PI focused projects. Most important of these resources are publishing agencies that disseminate New Zealand PI and Samoan writings. Pacific Islander/Samoan publishing companies such as Mataaliki Press, Pasifika Press, Learning Media Limited, Anau Ako Pasifika, Pacific Islanders' Educational Resource Centre, and the Wellington Multicultural Educational Resource Centre, to name a few, have and continue to circulate Samoan resource books and other cultural and social studies readers (New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2008). HI Samoans do not have access to specific sources such as those in New Zealand and much of the Hawai'i-produced literature become inaccessible for long periods following their completion. For example, theses and dissertations by Hawaii-based Samoan researchers such as Laura Fepuleai, Rochelle Fonoti, Saili Stefane and Faafetai Lesa were unavailable to me at the time of writing this paper. Because Hawai'i lacks the publishing resources similar to New Zealand, studies produced by HI Samoan academics are often unavailable. When these studies become attainable, however, they remain on the shelves of private collections, mainly at the University of Hawaii's Hawaiian/Pacific collection, which is seldom visited by the

majority of HI Samoans.

Noteworthy, too, is the fact that although Samoans in both places experienced similar prejudices and stereotypes, NZ Samoans were in the company of other Pacific Islanders who share similar colonial histories. This common bond aided in the organizing of PI civic groups and the unification of Pacific Islanders that would continue to strengthen until till today. Often, when people struggle through overt and covert difficulties to attain goals amidst challenging social, physical, emotional and psychological conditions, they continue to press forward even when those goals appear to have been achieved, in order to secure socioeconomic parity and opportunities for future generations. Presently, Auckland is considered to be the world's largest Polynesian city with Pacific Islanders comprising nearly a third of the country's total population (Hanlon, 2008; Henderson, 2008).

An interesting point for consideration which supports the HI Samoan case is the culturally sensitive acculturative methods implemented by the state under federal legislation. For instance, the main objectives behind the bilingual education program of the 1970s sought to educate HI Samoan youth using Samoan language and instructional materials, standard education curriculum, followed by the gradual transition of bilingual students into regular classrooms. Educators and non-Samoan students were provided with Samoan cultural readers, and at the same time, all students were encouraged to acknowledge their culture while honing an appreciation for Hawai'i's multicultural communities. As Pablo et al. noted earlier, "enhanced self-concept and enhanced pride in one's cultural heritage and appreciation of other cultures"

were among the foremost concerns of the state's bilingual initiative. This early attempt at acceptance of HI Samoans and their distinct cultural heritage in a very important institution outside of Samoa and outside of the diasporic Samoan home may have created a secured identity amongst HI Samoans early on. Although the funding for this bilingual education method may have been scant in later years, a “renewed focus on indigenous people, particularly the Native Hawaiians,” helped to keep some focus on Hawai’i’s Pacific Islanders, though most programmatic funding were geared towards Native Hawaiian projects (Mayer, 2008).

Spatial differences between Samoan migration to New Zealand and Hawai’i are also contributing factors in the development of resources which support the NZ Samoans' progressive identity expressions. Since travel to New Zealand began in the early 1900s, a little before HI Samoans, NZ Samoans are more socially rooted in their communities and community empowerment endeavors. NZ Samoans looked to settle permanently and worked towards purchasing homes, owning properties and possessions with which to accommodate their immediate family members and other relatives who journeyed to the country later. In contrast, majority of HI Samoans moved into military housing, with the latter third wave dispersing into government housing projects such as Kuhio Park Terrace (KPT). As Franco indicated, American Samoans are able to travel freely in and out of the US. As the large majority of HI Samoans are US Nationals, they continue to practice circular migration, or *malaga* movements between Tutuila, Hawai’i, the US mainland and back to American Samoa. Continuous movements to and through Hawai’i leave many

HI Samoans in a situation where they do not own homes or permanent properties in the state. This lack of permanency in the HI Samoan case creates various problems for youth, resulting from the inconsistencies in diasporic environments. Clearly, a diasporic Hawaiian community differs drastically from the US mainland's migrant communities, especially when compared with the "sameness" throughout New Zealand.

From a historical point, the first documented migration of HI Samoans came here initially for religious purposes and developed the first community in Laie under the umbrella of the Mormon religion, now, of course, under a Polynesian community. The LDS church was instrumental in the first Samoans' adjustment and acculturation, as the Mormons created their own institutions specifically to provide education and employment for its Samoan members. Much like the NZ Samoans, Laie Samoans were a part of a strong network of support which contributed to their sense of community rooted-ness. Many HI Samoans in Laie own homes and properties and invest much time in community development and cultural perpetuation activities. Laie Samoans such as Pulefano Galea'i have been strong cultural and community leaders instrumental in Laie-based projects like the choreography of the PCC's Polynesian show and the Samoan village operations, establishing the *World's Fire Knife Competition* as well as the *We Are Samoa Cultural Festival*. Cultural leaders like Galea'i often expand these sorts of community projects to the greater Samoan community in the Honolulu area through cultural celebrations like those mentioned earlier, annually held at Keehi Lagoon. This kind of progression towards ethnic and cultural identity expressions by socially-rooted, older

generation HI Samoans is probably most similar to the progressive cultural movement in New Zealand.

Interestingly, the rise of identity expressions by both NZ and HI Samoans are, to some extent, connected and attributed to a “Polynesian-ness.” New Zealand's huge Pacific Islander or Polynesian population has the support of the government through the establishment of funding for those Pacific and Polynesian cultural identity expressions that promote each of the respective cultures in New Zealand. On the other hand, as HI Samoans begin to find a comfortable space to embrace our culture and express our ethnicity, the state, through its tourism and entertainment industries, has found that advantageous. As we strive to express our Samoan-ness using the avenues and means available to us in our host environment, widespread commercialization via tourism has marginalized us in a different way—by lumping us together under Hawai'i's “Polynesian-ness,” benefiting state and national economies. Also, there is scarcely any unique US funding specifically for Samoan ethnic and cultural projects. There are some generally categorized grants available for cultural projects by Pacific Islanders (like the Pacific Islanders in Communication), but those specify broader conditions, mainly for Native Hawaiians, Native Americans and Alaska Natives and do not include Samoan endeavors. Through my own grant searches for community cultural projects, I found that most US government funding are for what the US considers to be “culture” such as drama, media and communications, ballet schools and theaters, which is how some Pacific Islanders in Communication projects receive funding. There is a distinct lack of resources and funding for projects

by Samoans and Pacific Islanders, unless it is combined or aligned with larger US public interest projects.

Other relevant points that have surfaced in this study is that the NZ Samoans' literature have contributed much to the general understanding of Samoan migrants and the diasporic generation altogether. On-going Pacific-focused government programs, available resources for PI produced projects and the widespread success of these projects along with their accessibility to those migrant Samoans in Hawai'i, Australia and the US provides a profound understanding of Samoans outside of Samoa.

Despite what appears to be a lack of information, means and interest in HI Samoans' evolving identities, other avenues have emerged and Samoans have seized those as opportunities for embracing an identity that was once somewhat ignored. Bold expressions through simple, yet ideal things like car decals and Samoan attire show HI Samoans' evolved attitudes and confidence in their ethnic and cultural identity. Taking on the permanent *tatau* is even more pronounced as this will serve as an identity "educator" for those *tatau-d* individuals' children, children's children and their Samoan identity. The popularity of Polynesian shows have afforded us a compromised, yet mostly Samoan identity expression, although it is nationally viewed as part of Hawai'i's Polynesian-ness and "melting-pot" images. Nevertheless, the popularity of Samoan *siva* has created and continues to fuel a deep sense of pride and excitement in being Samoan among the youth, as well as older generation HI Samoans. Overall, as Hereniko's quote above suggests, our various forms of Samoan identity expressions are the "signposts" that exist in our host

environment and help us, especially the younger generation, to know and understand who we are. Also according to Hereniko, the current trends towards HI Samoans freely expressing our Samoan-ness in average symbols like car decals; in reviving and modernizing Samoan “traditional” attire and the *tatau*; and in the popularity of Samoan *siva* locally and nationally are an indication of an evolution of our ethnic and cultural identity (1999: 138). The evolved identity—our Samoan-ness—that is displayed through the forms available to us reflect the situations and relationships we experience as Samoans in Hawai‘i, relating to our past for present and future identification of a Samoan-ness that was not often acknowledged as early migrants focused on adjustment and acculturation.

Patricia Grace eloquently states that “...there are relationships between people and the[ir] environment, people and the spirit world, people and the authorities that govern their lives” (in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999: 70-71). These various forms of cultural and ethnic identity expressions found throughout Oahu's population of Samoans, then, are a result of such relationships, especially considering the national and local “authorities” that more or less govern HI Samoans in the diaspora. Transcending assimilation difficulties in a Pacific-based host community has been challenging for HI Samoans, but the overarching “feel” of Hawai‘i as “an island home away from your island home” has instilled some level of security and confidence in a Samoan identity.

XIII. Final Reflections

“A person is a locus of shared biographies...they are who they have become as a result of shared relationships with people, places and things” (Alan Howard 1990:261-262)

Next year in 2009 will mark the 90th year since the first wave of Samoans arrived in Hawai'i. Since the first documented Samoan migration to Hawai'i in 1919, the limited number of existing Hawai'i-based academic literature has been the primary sources which served to inform Hawai'i's non-Samoans about us. These sources, unfortunately, continue to remain the basis of our history here, and as the times change, so should the literature in reflecting a shift towards relevant, more progressive matters in terms of discourses. Through this paper, for instance, I sought to examine some of the reasons why Hawai'i's Samoan seemed an unresponsive group amidst increasing developments in New Zealand Samoans' artistic and academic identity expressions. In my mission to understand our seeming non participation, I actually discovered that we are "silent" no more. We have come a long way since being negatively identified by our use of an *'ie lavalava* in public spaces, and we are now dressing and appearing as confident Samoans, when once that aspect of our very Samoan-ness was significantly overlooked. There have also been some exciting progress manifested in successful Hawai'i Samoans, such as Mufi Hanneman, Honolulu's Mayor; Jack Tihati Thompson, successful entrepreneur and owner of Tihati Productions; Dr Mavis Maiava Alaimalo, first Samoan female psychologist; and many others in the federal judicial system, music and entertainment industry, academia, athletics and so on, proving that transcendence of stereotypes is a reality, not just a possibility.

Our Samoan-ness, regardless of degree, is important to understand, embrace, express and appreciate. In speaking with Fata Simanu-Klutz,

University of Hawai'i Samoan Language Instructor, she expressed to me that within her own household, "there are three generations, each with their own take on what Samoan-ness in Hawai'i is." She added that "our fluid culture is the connection to kinship and customary values and our Samoan-ness is how those values extend outside of customs, kinship and Samoa (Simanu-Klutz, 2008). Another inspirational Samoan figure, Dr Mavis Maiava Alaimalo, shared her thoughts about being Samoan in Hawai'i:

"A Samoan identity in contemporary Hawai'i, much like it is in New Zealand, is not an exclusive one by any means. It is inclusive and encompasses and reflects religious, professional, and personal capacities, which are important and necessary for identity security." (Alaimalo, 2008, personal communication.)

For me, a combination of these learned sources' information and the literature that highlights our early adjustment has aided in reaching an understanding for both NZ and HI Samoans' contemporary ethnic and cultural identity expressions. As Alan Howard sums up, I am who I have become because of the intense and penetrating experiences that have shaped my diasporic Samoan-ness. My Samoan-ness is a reflection of my life journey, harsh encounters, endurances and relationships with "people, places and things." Throughout the writing process, I have pieced together some pieces of my own personal identity puzzle through acknowledging the depth and seriousness of both HI and NZ Samoans' situations, acculturation and derived notions. With a better understanding of our origins in Hawai'i combined with the success, inspiration and influence of Samoans in New Zealand and Hawai'i, other Hawai'i Samoans will understand and continue where I leave off, contributing to wider discourses and creating change in local literature. Perhaps if we persist with

these kinds of efforts we will reach a centennial celebration in which Hawai'i
Samoan writers will contribute to and document that milestone.

XIV. Expressions of Samoan-ness, Figures/Images

New Zealand Samoans Advancing Samoan Culture and Ethnic Identity



Figure 1 From top, left to right: Renowned author and scholar, Dr Albert Wendt; New Zealand contemporary musical group, Jamoa Jam; Anthropologist, Dr Melani Anae; movie filmed in and starring New Zealand Samoans, *The Tattooist*; Tofiga and Ete. The Laughing Samoans; Popular music group, Pacific Soul; Oscar Kightley's *Samoan Wedding* movie; T-shirt from www.teara.govt.nz website, reads: "There are only 2 kinds of people in this world...Samoans and those who wanna be" (images found on the world wide web)

Rank by Race, for the State of Hawaii: 2000

Subject	Race alone 1/	Subject	Race alone or in combination 2/
White	294,102	White	476,162
Japanese	201,764	Japanese	296,674
Filipino	170,635	Filipino	275,728
Native Hawaiian	80,137	Native Hawaiian	239,655
Chinese 3/	56,600	Chinese 3/	170,803
Korean	23,537	Korean	41,352
Black or African American	22,003	Black or African American	33,343
Samoan	16,166	Samoan	28,184
Vietnamese	7,867	American Indian and Alaska Native	24,882
Other Micronesian (exc. Guamanian or Chamorro)	6,492	Vietnamese	10,040
Tongan	3,993	Other Asian 4/	10,020
American Indian and Alaska Native	3,535	Other Micronesian (exc. Guamanian or Chamorro)	8,401
Other Asian 4/	3,418	Tongan	5,988
Laotian	1,842	Other Pacific Islander, not specified 3/	5,059
Guamanian or Chamorro	1,663	Guamanian or Chamorro	4,221
Asian Indian	1,441	Asian Indian	3,145
Thai	1,259	Other Polynesian (exc. NH, Samoan, Tongan)	3,019
Other Pacific Islander, not specified	872	Laotian	2,437
Other Polynesian (exc. NH, Samoan, Tongan)	588	Thai	2,284
Indonesian	292	Indonesian	709
Cambodian	235	Fijian	459
Fijian	214	Malaysian	354
Malaysian	115	Cambodian	330
Sri Lankan	114	Sri Lankan	176
Pakistani	35	Pakistani	97
Other Melanesian (exc. Fijian)	26	Other Melanesian (exc. Fijian)	44
Hmong	20	Hmong	22
Bangladeshi	6	Bangladeshi	10

1/ People who chose only one race.

2/ People who chose only one race or people who have chosen two or more races. Numbers for the race groups may add to more than

Figure 2 "Rank by Race" table for Hawai'i 2000.

(<<http://hawaii.gov/dbedt/info/census/Folder.2005-10-13.2927/hsdc-tables>>

Expressing Samoan-ness In Hawai'i

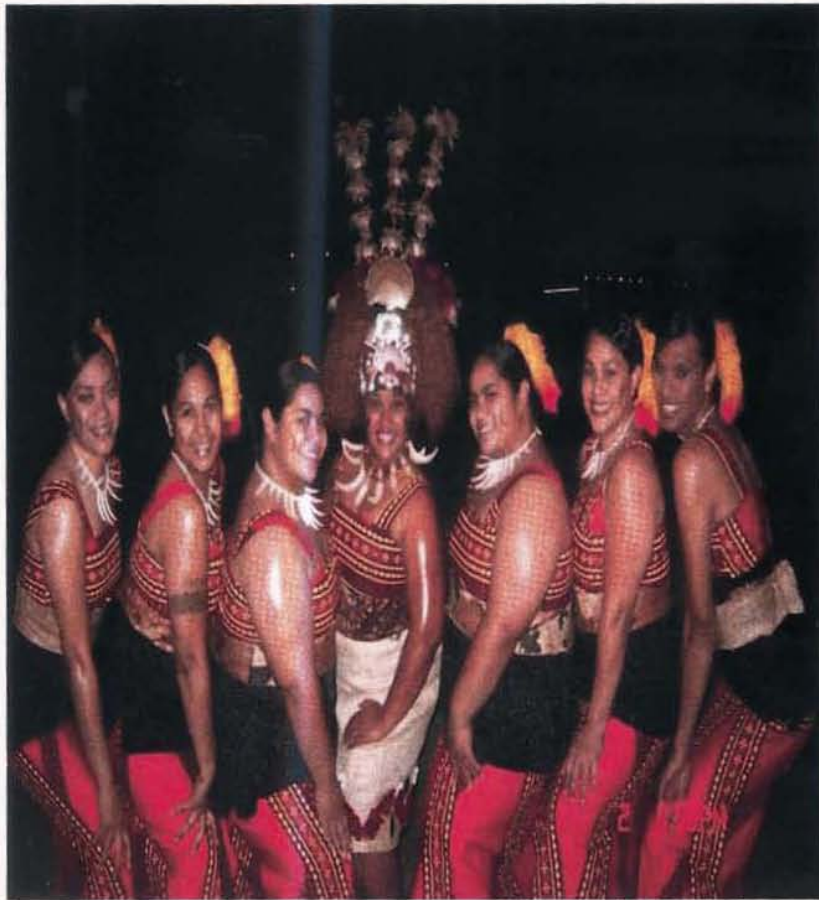


Figure 3 Groups such as the United Samoan Organization of Hawai'i (USOH), pictured above, express a diasporic Samoan identity in performing arts, engaging in community service, cultural awareness projects and promoting post-secondary education among HI Samoan youth.

Some Contemporary Expressions of *Samoaan-ness* in Hawai'i



Figure 4 Top Left: Contestants/Applicants for the United Samoan Organization of Hawaii's *Miss Le Lalelei o Samoa* Cultural Scholarship Pageant, August, 2008; **Figure 5** Top Right: Tattooed Samoan fire knife dancer and local recording talent, Afatia Thompson of Tihati Productions; **Figure 6** Bottom Left: Car decal expressing being "100% Samoan"; **Figure 7** Bottom Right: Part of a larger group recently tattooed by Sulu'ape Petelo, November 2008.



Expressing Samoan-ness in Hawai'i: Car Decals



Figure 8 Samoan car decals expressing cultural pride: Above: "*Fa'avae i Le Atua Samoa*," meaning 'Samoa Is Founded On God' with the Samoa government seal or "coat of arms"; "*100% Samoan*" with (independent) Samoa's "coat of arms"; **Figure 9** Below: "*Fa'a Samoa*" with two *nifo oti*, Samoan "tooth of death" blades/Samoan swords, or knives typically used for knife or fire knife dancing.





Figure 10 Samoan car decals: a map of the island of Tutuila, American Samoa



Figure 11 Car decals can indicate religious faith such as this below: "Solid Uso" with an image of praying hands (*USO* means sibling—when used by a male, it means brother; when said by a female it means sister, but can't be used across genders). This vehicle belongs to a pastor of a Samoan Assembly of God Church known as "Solid Rock."



Figure 12 This patriotic “ribbon” type of sticker is popular among families with members in the military. The regular decals are yellow and can be seen on many automobiles throughout Hawai’i. This one has been Samoan-ized with “*Samoan Pride*” and can be an indication that this car belongs to someone in the US military, or the owner has family members in the military.



Figure 13 Car decals such as this one displaying the name, "LETOA," are not uncommon. This is clearly an identifier of the family, and possibly the genealogy of the owner of this car.



Figure 14 Some stickers are smaller and fit well on an automobile's bumper or beside the license plate as shown above with the Samoan Government seal on the bumper and an 'ava (kava) bowl with *to'oto'o* (staff) and *fue* (fly whisk)--symbols usually associated with *matai*, or chiefs and portrays respect and pride in the "traditional" culture, the *fa'asamoa*.



Figure 15 *"AFAKASI: Half Is Better Th[a]n Nothing"* (*afakasi* means literally, "half-caste," or half- breed; indicating a part or half Samoan owner.)



Figure 16 Some car decals are gigantic and cover the height, sometimes the width of the entire rear window of an automobile, such as this one below which reads, "*Fealofani Samoa*." (*Fealofani*, means friendly, agreeable, easy to befriend, good-natured, etc.)

Expressing Samoan-ness in Hawai'i: Dressing and Looking Samoan



Figure 17 Dressing Samoan: Above: Various *puletasi* worn by many Samoan women and girls show contemporary designs, but still maintain their Samoan-ness. The white in the middle and the black on the left were designed and sewn by my mother (images are personal photos).

Figure 18 Below: Modern *puletasi* designs are popular among the Samoan women, such as this style that was featured in the American Samoan 2008 calendar, designed in Tutuila, American Samoa. It is very common for HI Samoan women to have their *puletasi* made in Tutuila.





Figure 19 2008 Contestants/Applicants (with the Pageant Chairman Tui Pule at center) of the *United Samoan Organization of Hawaii's (USOH) Miss Le Lalelei O Samoa Cultural Scholarship Pageant* display their different styles of *puletasi* during the *Samoa Mo Samoa Festival* held annually every July at Keehi Lagoon in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The Cultural Scholarship Pageant encourages young ladies to be confident Samoan women in every way, beginning with being comfortable in "appearing" Samoan.

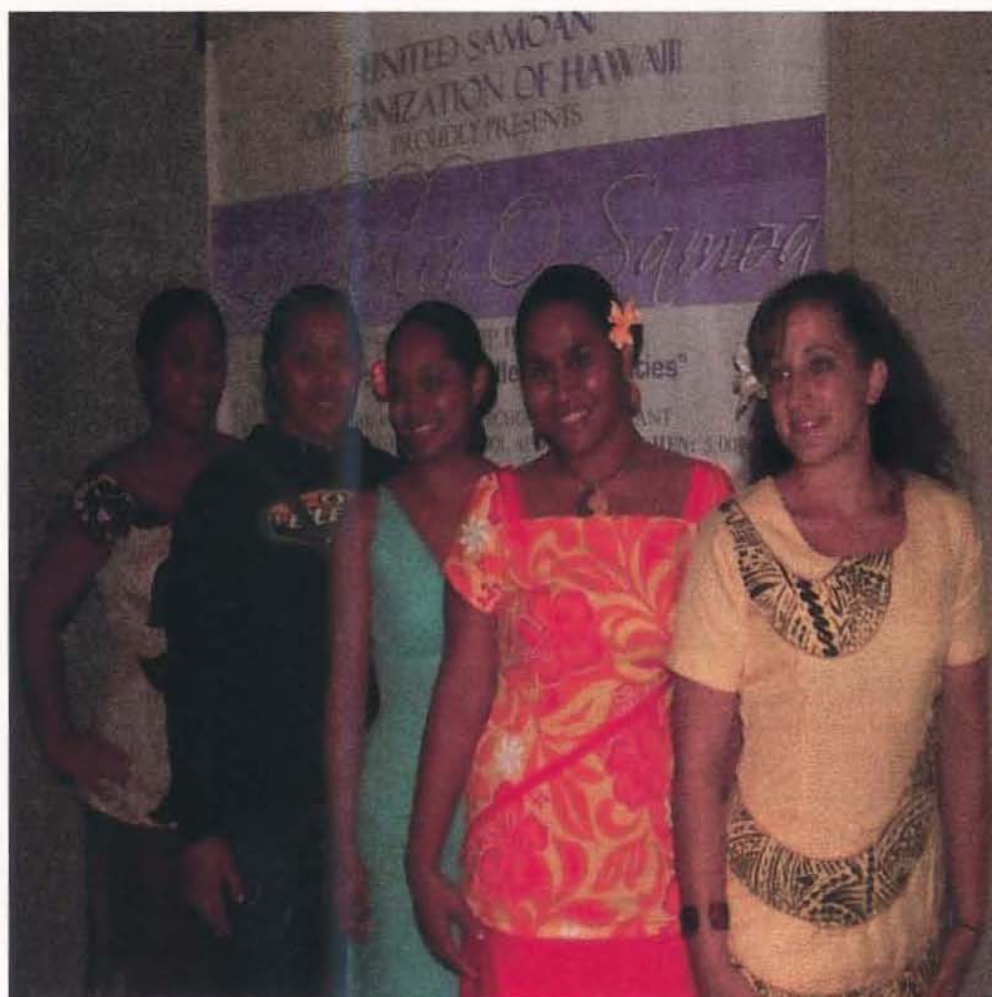


Figure 20 Miss Le Lalelei O Samoa Scholarship Pageant Contestants 2007 in their different *puletasi* designs. The first (yellow) and the middle (baby blue) *puletasi* were designed and sewn in Tutuila, American Samoa.



Figure 21 The University of Hawai'i Football Team's Head Coach (in the green *'ie faitaga*) McMackin with former NFL players Ma'a Tanuvasa (on the left from the coach in a beige *'ie faitaga*) and Jesse Sapolu (on the right from the coach in the blue *'ie faitaga*) and other non-Samoan men in Samoan styled attire. (image from www.honoluluadvertiser.com)

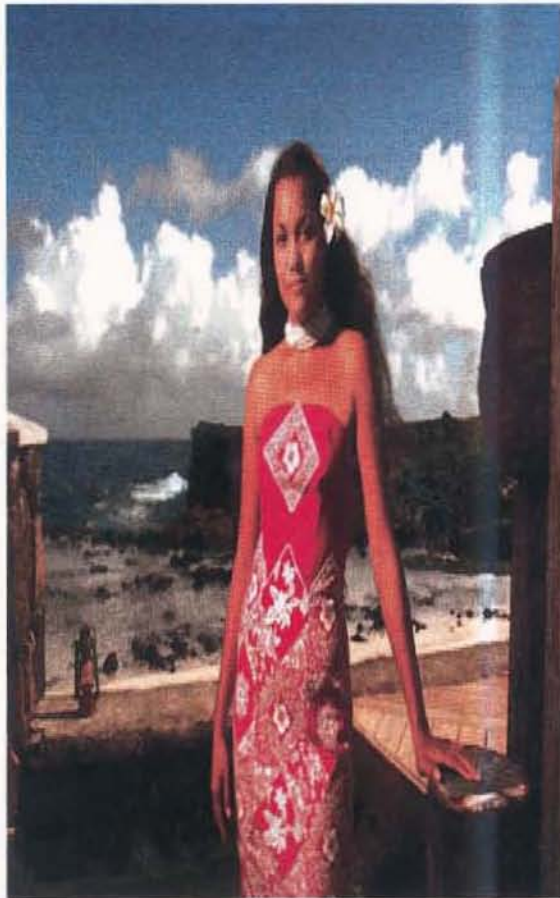


Figure 22 *Puleta* designs by tailors in Tutuila featured in 2007 American Samoa Calendar. [Images from www.pacificmagazine.net (L) & www.doi.gov (R)]

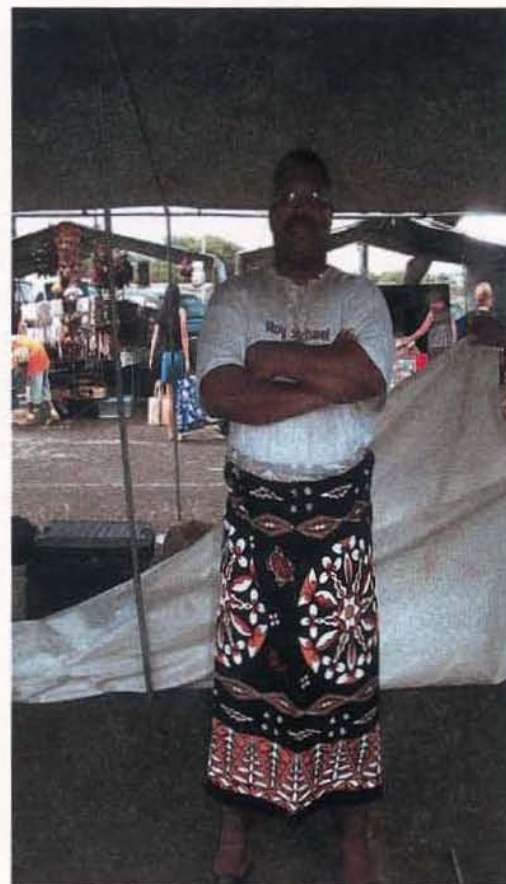


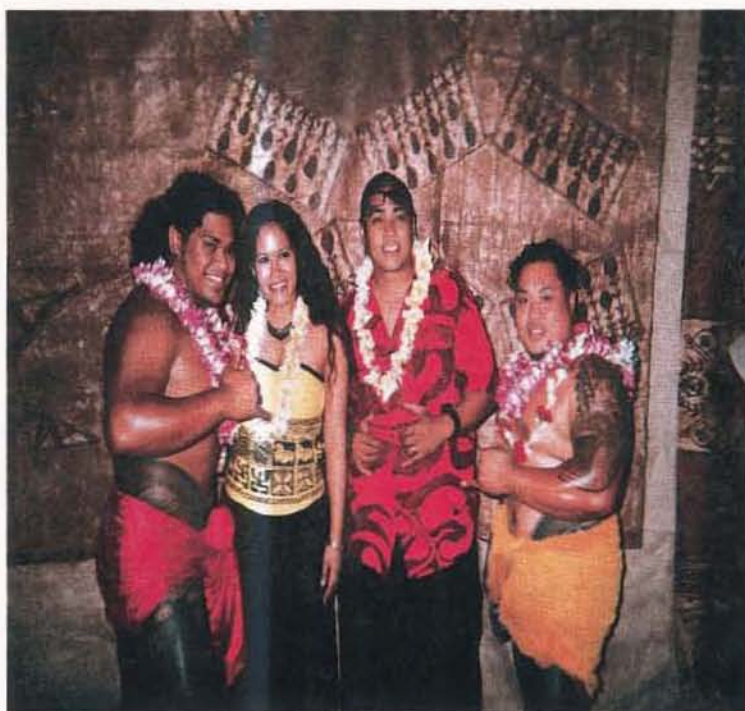
Figure 23 Left: Successful Samoans Dressing Samoan-Left: Husband and wife team of health professionals, Dr Ernest Alaimalo, M.D., and Dr Mavis Maiava Alaimalo, PsyD., wearing their matching Samoan ensembles (Personal photos).

Figure 24 Right: A gentleman looking comfortable in his *'ie lavalava* at the Aloha Stadium Swap Meet/Flea Market (image from web).

Expressing Samoan-ness in Hawai'i: Le Tatau



Figure 25 Left: The Samoan male's tattoo known as the *pe'a* (photo from web). **Figure 26** Right: The Samoan female's tattoo called the *malu* (family member).



Figures 27 & 28 Samoan "traditional" Tattoo: On November 14, 2008, a group of nearly 30, 3 women included, who were tattooed by Sulu'ape Petelo Su'a, the *tufuga ta tatau* from Upolu, Samoa, celebrated the completion of their Samoan-ness, displaying proudly their beautiful Samoan *pe'a*.





Figures 29, 30, 31. Members of the group recently tattooed by Sulu'ape Petelo Sua in November 2008 at the huge gathering/party to celebrate the completion of their Samoan identity marker.

The Tatau in Contemporary Context



Figures 32 & 33 Angela Bolson of San Diego, California (tat2inc.com) claims to be the "only woman in the world to be honored with the Sulu'ape title," the title "traditionally" belonging to the family of *tufuga ta tatau*, the *Sua aiga* in Lefaga, Samoa. More photos of Angela can be found on her profile page titled, "Sulu'ape Angela" (www.myspace.com/suluapeangela)



Figure 34 A High School Samoan club performing a *ma'ulu'ulu* at the PCC's annual "We Are Samoa" Cultural Festival. This is also the site/stage for the center's nightly Polynesian show.



Figure 35 Polynesian Cultural Center's "Samoa section" (www.polynesia.com)



Figure 36 Cultures featured at the PCC and in its Polynesian show are L to R: Marquesas (features Marquesan dances/music in the village at the center, but not during the main show); Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti, Maori, Hawai'i and Fiji (Fiji is included in most Polynesian shows, as it is at the PCC). [images from www.polynesia.com-PCC's website]



Figure 37 Dancing Samoans: Above: *Tauluga* performance by *Miss Le Lalelei O Samoa* Cultural Scholarship Pageant winner, 2007-2008, Jasmine Laumoli (image from www.myspace/groups/usoh).

Figure 38 Below: *Tauluga* performance by a High School Samoan club, participants in the PCC's "We Are Samoa" Festival. (www.polynesia.com)

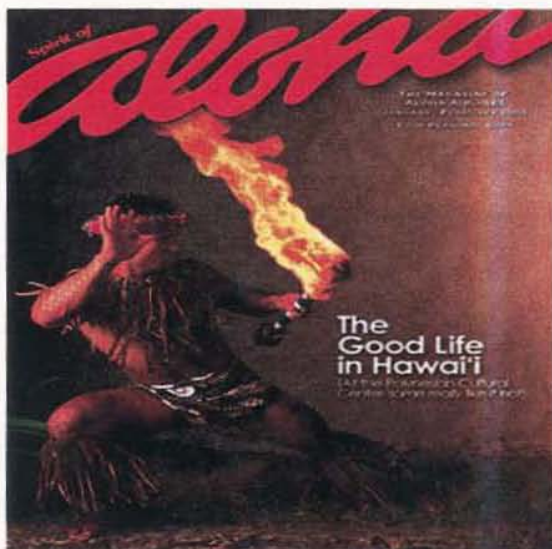




Figure 39 Polynesian Cultural Center's "Samoan section" includes a male's *siva fa'ataupati*, a body slapping dance. (www.polynesia.com)

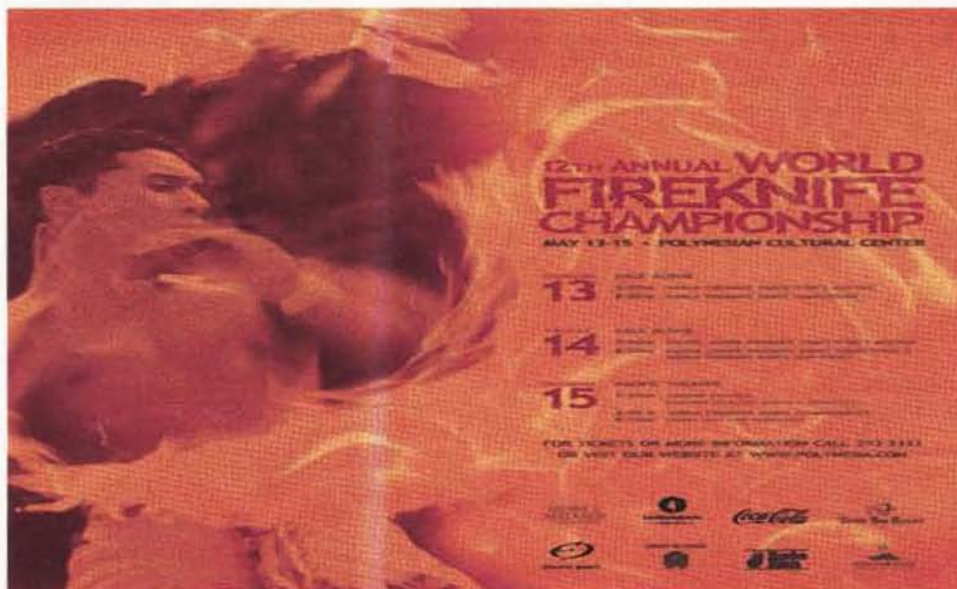


Figures 40, 41, 42 Tihati Productions (owned by the Thompsons, a part Samoan family) is one of the largest entertainment production companies in Hawai'i, with shows on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and Hawai'i islands. Most other Polynesian entertainment companies like the PCC are located on Oahu, Hawai'i. Featured above in all 3 advertisements for Tihati's is fire knife dancer, Afatia Thompson, son of the owners—from www.tihati.com (notice the photo at the bottom before the Samoan *pe'a* and the top photos with the *pe'a*).



Fire knife dancing is the featured climactic ending of Polynesian shows. **Figure 43** Above Left: PCC advertisement as "Aloha" Magazine cover(polynesia.com); **Figure 44** Right: Located on the west coast of Oahu island is Paradise Cove Luau. Paradise Cove's tattooed fire knife dancer (paradisecove-luau.com); **Figure 45** Below: Germaine's Luau's (also on the west coast of Oahu) fire knife dancer(germainesluau.com).





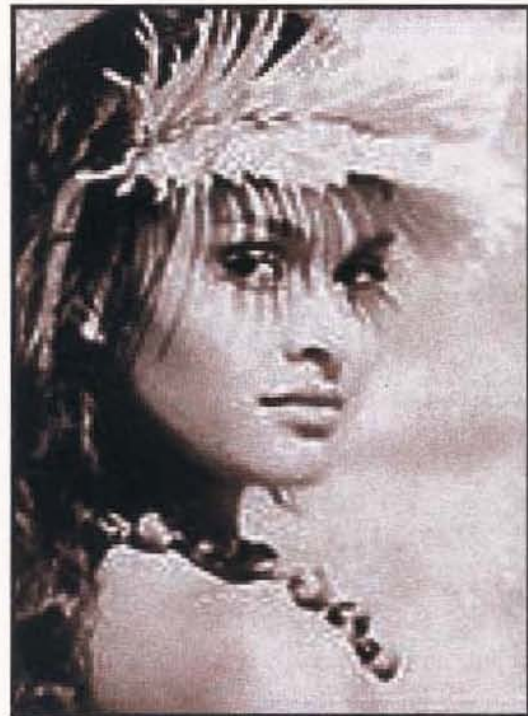
The PCC in hosts a "World Fire Knife" Competition that attracts participants from the mainland USA, Samoa, American Samoa and other Samoans and non-Samoans locally and from all over. **Figure 46** Above: PCC's Fireknife Competition Announcement. **Figure 47** Below: 2008 Winners of the Fireknife competition: 1st place-Viavia Tiimalu from Florida (center); 2nd place-Mikaele Oloa from Florida (left) & 3rd place-Joseph Cadousteau of Pape'ete, Tahiti (right). [www.polynesia.com]



Samoans Representing Hawai'i, Hawaiians and Hawai'i's "Polynesian-ness"



The Water from Hawai'i's Heavens



Samoans Representing Hawai'i and Hawaiians and Hawai'i's Polynesian-ness: **Figure 48** Above Left: Tara Chanel is the Hawaiian Isles water "hula girl"; **Figure 49** Right: Alana Prescott Seno is one of Kim Taylor Reece's featured models; **Figure 50** Below: Model Cierra Faletoi representing a scene from Hawai'i's nostalgic era



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